the ecumenical review

Volume 36 Number 1, January 1984

World Council of Churches

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The quarterly of the World Council of Churches

Editorial

The material brought together here relates for the most part to the eight issues selected for special consideration and action at the Sixth Assembly of the WCC, held in Vancouver July-August 1983. The Assembly received reports on each of these issues and sent them to the member churches for appropriate study and action. They are published in the official Assembly report, *Gathered for Life.**

Besides the eight reports the Assembly produced other material relevant to these issues, most of it in the form of introductory presentations to the work in the eight issue groups. This is true of the papers by E. Tamez, L. Thompson, O. Muchena, K. Than, S. Talbot, H. Falcke, U. Duchrow, A. Gnanadason, W. Simpfendörfer, A. Adegbola and M. Traber. The three papers by V. Borovoy, J. Pronk and J. Francis were presented in plenary sessions in the context of the discussions on the Assembly theme "Jesus Christ — the Life of the World". The fact that they are published together with the material on the issues rather than in connection with the theme is an indication of the overlap between various parts of the Assembly programme. Underlying the great variety of concerns brought up at the Assembly there was also a commonality. This should be no surprise to anyone familiar with the nature of the ecumenical debate where diversity and unity are always linked because they are interdependent. Ecumenical gatherings display a great diversity precisely because they have to be concerned with the *oikoumene*, the *whole* inhabited earth. Other groups, whether religious or political, can always draw a line somewhere and say: "This problem is outside our (confessional or ideological) purview." Ecumenical gatherings — if they are truly ecumenical — have no such excuse.

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* Reports of the Vancouver Assembly are available in French, German and Spanish.

In this respect the ecumenical nature of the National Council of Churches in the USA has recently been tested by the debate about the admission of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, discussed in the article by J. Gros.

From a variety of reactions to the Vancouver Assembly, both formal and informal, it can already be deduced that by considering the discussion of the theme, the debate on the issues, and the adoption of statements and resolutions (see the *Chronicle* in this issue), we have by no means exhausted the significance of the Assembly. There are many other aspects that have made this gathering unique. These will be taken up in future issues of this journal.

T.W.

Taking Steps Towards Unity

Life in Unity

Vitaly Borovoy

Our Lord Jesus Christ said while testifying about himself: "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10: 10). And in his prologue St John solemnly proclaims: "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1: 4-5). This is the main theme of our Assembly.

And this is the main content of the Christian witness and of the Christian ministry — at all times and in all places. Life is the gift of God holding out against the powers of evil, death, and destruction, and it is realized in all its fullness — abundantly — through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.

The church is this kind of communion. And life in unity is an essential element of this communion.

Our Lord Jesus Christ prayed for this unity in his high priestly prayer: "... that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe..." (John 17: 21). "I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me" (John 17: 23).

This oneness in Christ is addressed to the world: "so that the world may believe", and "so that the world may know that thou hast sent me" (John 17: 21, 23). The church is called to be a sign, a pledge, and manifestation of such life in unity.

This unity is the quality of the church given to it by God in Jesus Christ through the grace of the Holy Spirit — as an immanent, organic property of its inner nature. But, at the same time, it is something given to the church, as a historical community, its permanent vocation to be sought and realized in the life of human society — in the course of its history — between its foundation by our Lord Jesus Christ and his second and glorious coming — "when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father... that God may be everything to every one" (1 Cor. 15: 24, 28).

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The eucharist — sacrament of unity

This unity, this gift and task of life in oneness manifests itself most fully in the church — in the holy eucharist.

Our Lord established the eucharist at the Last Supper as the sacrament of unity and love. He spoke to the apostles about love as the uniting force. The new and second Adam, he is the way for human beings who come to the Father in him and through him. And he is the sacramental house of the Father in which there are many mansions and where believers, by means of the beneficial power of love, are being united in the one sacramental body with him and with each other. They are united through the sacrament of blood and flesh, according to his own words: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (John 6: 56). The apostolic teaching about the church as the body of Christ is rooted in the liturgical experience and expresses the eucharistic reality: "... there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor. 10: 17). St John Chrysostom explains it in this way: "We are this very body. What is this bread? The body of Christ... What do the communicants share? The body of Christ... not many bodies, but the one body."

Believers become the body of Christ in the course of the holy eucharist. That is why the eucharist is the mystery of the church, the "mystery of community", the "mystery of communion" (*mysterion syvaxeōs, mysterion koinoniās*).

Eucharistic communion is not only a spiritual or moral unity. It is an actual realization of the united, integral life in Christ. The image of the body itself points to the organic continuity of life. The one life of the God-man manifests itself in the believers — in the communion of the mystery, in the unity of the life-giving Spirit. The fathers spoke without hesitation about "natural" and "physical" communion, explaining realistically the gospel image of the vine. St Cyril of Jerusalem calls the communicants at the eucharist "united with Christ in body and blood". In his one body the Lord brings believers together in himself: so that we ourselves come together and intermingle into the unity with God and with each other. St John Chrysostom says: "He blended himself with us and dissolved his body in us so that we become one, as a body connected with a head. And this is a sign of the strongest love..."

All human alienation and exclusiveness are eliminated in the eucharist. Believers become "co-members" in Christ, and thus co-members with each other. A new, catholic humanity is created — a new family of human kind. St Simeon teaches: "All are the one Christ, as one body of many members."

The eucharist is a catholic sacrament, a sacrament of peace and love, and thus the sacrament of unity in life, and of life in unity. St Augustine testifies: "Mysterium pacis et unitatis nostrae."

A sacrament of love

This is the supper of love, as the Last Supper was indeed the supper of love when our Lord revealed and showed to the disciples "the most perfect way" of absolute love according to the image of love. "Even as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John 13:34). And this love is in the image of the triune love: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love" (John 15:9). The Lord brings the commandment of love to the mystery of the trinitarian unity: "That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us... I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one" (John 17:21, 23). For believers this is possible only through Christ and in Christ, in the unity of his body, and in the communion of his chalice. The trinitarian unity is mysteriously reflected in the unity of the catholic church. According to this same image believers must have "one heart and soul" (Acts 4:32). This is realized, first of all, in the eucharist and by means of the eucharist in life. Communion in the eucharist is the realization and peak of church unity.

The eucharist is celebrated on behalf of the church, on behalf of all Christian people, "on behalf of all and for all". As St John Chrysostom says: "This is the purifying sacrifice common for all the world... and the common kingdom is revealed..." The church says in its prayer: "Furthermore we offer unto thee this our reasonable worship on behalf of the whole universe." Litanies of intercession at the eucharist embrace the whole world, and the bloodless sacrifice is offered for the whole world for the dead and the living. Mentioning the living and the dead in the eucharist means putting every individual into the one and catholic body of the church. And the church asks God to fill gaps in its memory, to make good its weakness: "And those whom we, through ignorance, or forgetfulness, or the multitude of names, have not remembered, do thou thyself call to mind, O God... who knowest every man and woman even from their mother's womb." The prayer of the eucharist embraces every situation, every possibility in life, all the intricacies of the earthly destiny of every human being. God's blessing and grace is invoked upon the life of all human beings, as all is embraced and is being embraced by the love of Christ: "Be thyself all things unto all human beings, O thou who knowest every being, his petition, his abode, and his need..." All life is seen in Christ. And the church prays: "Remember, O Lord, those who have offered unto thee these gifts, and those for whom, and by whom, and in behalf of whom they have offered them." Then follows an enumeration of all possible categories and conditions of human beings, for whom the eucharist is offered... This great service of remembrance in the face of God is concluded with the common prayer: "Have in remembrance, O Lord, this congregation here present, and those who are absent... and have mercy upon them and upon us, according to the multitude of thy mercies. Fill their treasuries with every good thing; maintain their marriage-bond in peace and concord; rear the infants; guide the young; support the aged; encourage the faint-hearted; collect the scattered... Voyage with those who voyage; journey with those who journey; defend the widows; protect the orphans; free the captives; heal the sick. Have in remembrance, O God, those who are under trial, and in the mines, and in prison, and in bitter labours, and in all affliction, distress and tribulation.

"Have in remembrance, O God, all those who invoke thy great loving kindness; those also who love us, and those who hate us, and those who have enjoined us, unworthy though we are, that we should pray for them; and all thy people, O Lord our God; and upon them all pour out thy rich mercy..."

A sign of victory

The fullness of the church is revealed in the eucharist. Every eucharist is celebrated in connection with the whole church, as if on behalf of it, of all its unity, oneness and fullness. In every eucharist we see the God-man, Christ as the founder and the head of the church, and with him we see his body — the one church as the united and whole body of Christ. The eucharist is a revelation about Christ and his church. The eucharist is the sign of victory, the sign of achieved salvation — the salvation from decay, the victory over death. This is the mystery of reconciliation — of love, not sorrow, of forgiveness, not judgment.

Christ suffered, but rose from the dead and destroyed death by his death — he is the author of life, the defeater of death. He rose from the dead to glory. His death and resurrection became our resurrection. That is why the eucharist is the victorious hymn to thanksgiving.

At the eucharist the church confesses the whole of word history to be under the guidance of this sign of victory. It considers the sacrament as the "united image of the united kingdom of the Saviour, as the image of the divine concern for the whole world, of all human beings and the entire creation". Thus, the eucharist is full of cosmic passion and embraces all the fullness of the deeds of the divine wisdom and love, all the fullness of the creation and of God's concern for the world.

God's eternal will with regard to the world is completed in Christ in his incarnation and resurrection. Substance was sanctified in the incarnation. We bring elements of the substance, of grain and grape, to be made holy in the eucharist. In Christ God's image and likeness were restored in human beings and in saints we see promised and longed for the "theosis" of a human being as something already realized. In the saints the church sees its own perfection, it sees the kingdom of God which came in power, as we and they are the one body, "though some members are more radiant than others" (St John Chrysostom). In the incarnation of the Lord the earthly world of human beings is reunited with the heavenly world of angels, and at the eucharist we pray and offer our sacrifice together with the heavenly powers, "as through Christ the church of angels and human beings became united" (Simeon of Thessalonica). Thus all the strata of existence, the cosmic, the human and the angelic, join together and interact with each other in the eucharist. In it the world is known as the real cosmos, whole and one, assembled and catholic.

In the eucharist human thought reaches back to the beginning of the world and looks forward to its final destiny. At the eucharist the church prays: "Thou from nothingness hast called us into being; and when we had fallen away from thee, didst raise us up again; and thou hast not ceased to do all things until thou hadst brought us back to heaven, and hadst endowed us with thy kingdom which is to come."

The way to the fullness of the kingdom is revealed in Christ once and for all. In the eucharist the beginning and the end of history join together, the creation stories and the prophesies of the Apocalypse. Here the transfiguration of the world begins. In the eucharist the completion of the church is portended, the complete unity of the whole humanity which we expect and await in the life of the age to come.

The eucharist is an anticipation of the resurrection according to the promise of our Saviour: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6: 54).

The hope and guarantee of the resurrection is "betrothal of the future life and the kingdom". "In the eucharist we touch the transfigured world, enter heaven, feel the life to come" (St John Chrysostom). According to the words of St Maximus the Confessor the eucharist is "the image of the future age and the end of this world".

All I have said so far contains not a single original word of mine. It is a true and exact exposition of the teaching about life and unity in the holy church through the holy eucharist as it was felt and experienced in the ancient church. I have presented this apostolic teaching of the New Testament about unity as expressed by the fathers and reflected in the ecclesiology and eucharistic practice of the ancient church — which is truly preserved today in the teaching, as well as in the eucharistic life, of the Orthodox Church — in the words of Father George Florovsky, an outstanding Russian Orthodox theologian, one of the fathers of the early stages of the ecumenical movement. He was one of a galaxy of brilliant Russian theologians and religious thinkers who were founders of the ecumenical movement. He is not with us any more, but he was a participant and a leading theologian at all the previous assemblies of the WCC, and if he had been with us in Vancouver he, and not I, would have presented this report. I should like this presentation to ring out as a tribute of gratitude in his honour.

The contemporary context

At present, we use these great riches of the Orthodox theology, religious and philosophical thought with gratitude and legitimately in the context of our participation in the ecumenical movement, and of our life and witness in a secular, socialist society.

This new ecclesiastical and socio-political context of life, under the completely new conditions of a socialist society, has allowed us to gather an immensely rich experience of Christian witness. Here the guarantee of success is not so much the theological and philosophical development of individual issues of mission and evangelism, as the witness of truth by means of realization in life of the great principles of the gospel. Our experience has proved that the success of the Christian witness in the contemporary secular world can be achieved only if the truths of Orthodoxy are brought by us into life, substantiated and shown to people in our "orthopraxy".

So now, let us ask ourselves: What conclusions are to be derived for our life, for the life of our churches, for our witness, from our teaching about life in unity, about the unity of the church as the united eucharistic community — the "sign" and "first fruits" of the unity of the human family under the one head and the source of life, our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom all God's creation is called to reach unity in communion with God, when God will be "everything to every one" (1 Cor. 15:28)?

First of all, we should always keep in mind and conscience the following words of God, given to all of us for all times by the prophet as God's great warning and call to repentance and correction: "What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the Lord;... Bring no more vain offerings;... I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly... When you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you;... cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord" (Isa. 1:11-18).

Our Lord Jesus Christ also says to us: "So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matt. 5:23-24).

Even though, down the centuries of Christian history, and for all Christians this warning has rung out everywhere as a permanent call for repentance and correction, in our contemporary context active love, orthopraxy, contextual theology (responding with concrete deeds to concrete needs and questions of the human family) are now direct dictates of our conscience rooted in our Christian faith and our adherence to the church of Christ.

Ecumenical imperatives

I shall mention here only some of the most important imperatives of this kind, closely connected with the Christian understanding of life in unity in its ecclesial and eucharistic as well as human, cosmic and natural inter-relations.

1. If we speak about life in unity in the church, about the inter-relation between the unity of the church and "the renewal of human community", then we must first overcome our historical divisions, if people are to believe us. In other words, all Christians must be reunited in the holy catholic and apostolic church. We need to give an example of such unity in deeds, in life, in the unity of faith and of the canonical foundations of our churches.

From this I deduce the paramount importance of Faith and Order and of the progress in achieving consensus with regard to baptism, eucharist and ministry.

2. If the bread of the eucharist is the bread of eternal life, and if while breaking it we are becoming participants in the Eternal Feast of the Lamb in God's kingdom, entering into communion with Christ and so with each other like brothers and sisters, it is only natural that we should take responsibility for fighting against hunger, poverty, disease and other manifestations of social injustice with regard to other people who are all our brothers and sisters.

As members of the one church of Christ and as communicants of the one bread and one chalice at the holy eucharist, we are responsible for our fellow human beings in the eyes of God, since they belong with us in the united family of God's children, the family of our brothers and sisters.

3. , If we are called to live out this unity in the church, and if we witness by our unity with Christ and with each other in the holy eucharist, then any hostility, discrimination, and division of people due to racial, national, ethnic, language, or cultural characteristics, because of sex differences, age, social status or educational background, any discrimination and oppression because of religious, confessional or ideological convictions — any non-fraternal relations, enmity, and alienation are incompatible with the Christian faith and with our membership in the church.

4. If the Church is one and is called to be a "sign" of unity and renewal for the rest of humanity, and if we partake of the chalice of peace, then it is a direct responsibility of every Christian and of all our churches to take part in peace-making, to struggle against militarism, the arms race, all threats of war and nuclear annihilation. It is our responsibility to struggle for salvation of the sacred gift of life — in the name of Jesus Christ about whom we testify as about the life of the world — and for complete and general disarmament, for detente and cooperation among nations.

5. If the church is one, and is called to serve the "renewal of the human community", and if in the holy eucharist we pray to God for all humanity, then cooperation and dialogue with people of other faiths and ideologies, with all people of "goodwill", is our duty, and we are responsible in the sight of God as much for them as we are for our fellow Christians and fellow members of the holy church.

6. The holy eucharist and salvation in its eschatological dimension has not only human (historical and ecclesiological) aspects, but also a cosmic aspect, since according to the apostle Paul: "The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God... because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (Rom. 8: 19-23).

Not only are the elements of substance (fruits and grain) sanctified in the eucharist; the sacrament also anticipates the final liberation from the bondage to decay into the freedom of glory for the children of God, for all creation, for everything in heaven and earth.

And here *oikonomia* and *oikologia* (i.e. reasonable, planned and purposeful management of the world "economy" and problems of management with regard to the nature and cosmos, i.e. the "ecological" problems, connected with the preservation of the environment surrounding us) become directly related to Christian concern for "the oneness of life" and "life in unity".

These are only some, if perhaps the most important, of the conclusions and tasks for Christian "orthopraxy", that are to be directly and imperatively derived from Christian "orthodoxy" when we consider at this

Assembly God's gift of life in unity and the importance of the eucharistic understanding and the eucharistic life of the ancient undivided church of the time of the ecumenical councils. For this understanding and this life have been revived with a special power in our minds as a call and an example for our witness and service in today's society.

With profound gratitude to God, and sincerely recognizing our personal weakness, we Orthodox can testify here that the experience of our Church and the sacrificial faithfulness of our believers can be our modest but positive input into the general Christian and human cause and into the discussions of these great and basic problems at our Assembly. Our hope and our joy are in this. Glory be to God for ever and ever.

Bread for All

Jan Pronk

Life in unity means work and bread for all. That requires a fair distribution of scarce resources and this, in turn, a fair distribution of political power. Life in unity is an ecumenical mandate of major economic significance, to be realized in political terms.

Up until a few centuries ago a just distribution of the earth's resources was neither an economic nor a political prerequisite to manage the world. There was one earth, but it contained many worlds, which were hardly dependent on each other. Life or death in one of them did not affect the others. If one part of the earth suffered a decay, others could still flourish. The distribution of the world's resources was not subject to global political decision-making.

The modern economic system

Two factors changed this pattern: colonialism and the technological revolution in communications. Both originated in the West, the result of political decisions in Western economic interests. The earth became one world: technically a small one, economically a managed one, politically dominated by a centre in the West — a global feudal society, controlled by an industrial elite which did not share resources, work and bread with the numerous have-nots.

Then we got World War II. Death and destruction in a divided world. After that a new era started with, for the first time in history of humankind, a worldwide effort to rationally manage international relations by creating a new international economic order, on the ruins left by the great

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depression and the war. It was a deliberate effort to create more work and more bread for more people. More life and more unity, not for ethical reasons but because of an enlightened self-interest of the then elite, which could only flourish under conditions of economic and political stability.

And so we got the Bretton Woods system: a World Bank and an International Monetary Fund together with an international organization dealing with world trade. And we established the United Nations, with its Security Council and its specialized agencies, enabling the nation states to negotiate stability and growth. The Marshall Plan injected new life into Western Europe. Development aid was provided to poor countries to help them build an infrastructure. New institutions were created to foster economic cooperation: OECD and the European Communities. The development of the third world was stimulated by the adoption of the Strategies for the First and the Second Development Decade. It was also the era of decolonization of the South and, after the Cold War, of detente between East and West.

Of course we should not glorify the past. Life in unity remained far from reality. But there was some progress towards more work and more bread for more people, due to concrete action — be it insufficient — for about 25 years.

It is different now and the situation changed about ten years ago. The new international economic order which had been created in the 1940s crumbled, and the call for a new one was not heard. Instead we got a North-South dialogue which resembled a dialogue between deaf and dumb, or even worse, because deaf and dumb do indeed communicate with each other. The United Nations lost credibility as a forum where economic and political problems can be negotiated and solved. Negotiations produced only words, no policies. Tension between East and West increased again. The arms race got out of control. Economically the world is in a crisis, with double-digit unemployment figures in the North and negative economic growth in the South. The beginning of the 1980s is characterized by less work and less bread for more people. Economic forecasts for the turn of the century are gloomy: even in the least pessimistic assumptions the number of people living below any decent level of existence will be higher than one billion in the year 2000. Concrete action is necessary to fight the crisis, to build a new order as we tried to do after the great depression and the war. But we shy away from action. Even meetings organized for that very purpose, like the Cancun Summit or UNCTAD VI, fail.

The reasons for the collapse

How did this come about? What are the basic reasons why progress towards more life and more unity, more work and more bread, collapsed? We have to know the answer to this question if we really want to work in the right direction.

In my view the reasons are two-fold. Firstly, the structural economic crisis in which the world finds itself today is rooted in the international economic system which had been created after World War II. For more than two decades that system served its purpose for those who created and controlled it: stability and growth. But at the same time the system had a number of basic structural deficiencies which eroded it. The absence of the socialist countries of Eastern Europe and of the third world countries from the negotiations of the basic elements of the system was one such deficiency. The international economic order was basically a Western one, with Western values — such as free markets and private enterprise — and controlled by Western countries. And if these countries tried to accommodate themselves by shifting domestic instabilities on to other countries — by exporting inflation, by manipulating exchange rates or by protecting weak and declining industries — they could easily do so, because there were no sanctions on bad behaviour.

That was the first reason: the deficiencies of the system made it highly unstable and weak. The second reason was that, instead of trying to rectify these basic deficiencies, governments produced more chaos by short-sighted inward-looking unilateral beggar-thy-neighbour policies.

For ten years we have been paralyzed. To quote Sonny Ramphal, the Secretary General of the Commonwealth: "The form of the North-South dialogue has been about what should be done, but the real argument, the often unspoken question, has been about why we should do anything." And at the same time the rich helped themselves. To quote Ramphal again: "There was no inertia or lack of innovation when the North felt its immediate interests endangered. The (Western) International Energy Agency was established within months of a perceived 'energy crisis'. Those elements of the debt crisis which most threatened major Western banks or Western strategic interests produced urgent intervention and impressive coordinated response. Meanwhile facilities which were refused when it was a question of supporting Southern economies were at hand to serve Northern interests." No substantial additional financial resources were committed to the least developed countries at the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in Paris in 1981, but new money — Special Drawing Rights — was available for European currency support or to prop up a weak dollar. There is no unity, and there is even no effort to hide that. "Why should we do anything at all?" is the present answer of the North to the demands by the South.

One reason for doing something is the growing interdependence between countries, or in the words of the Brandt Commission a "common interest" of all countries in the survival of the world economy and of the world itself. It may seem doomsday language, but indeed, survival is at stake. The present international economic crisis is, for a number of reasons which I will not elaborate now, more fundamental and more complex than any previous one. And economic problems ahead are enormous. The transition from traditional to new and renewable sources of energy, the transition from negative to neutral environmental effects of economic growth and, above all, the transition from a world population of at present four billion people to eight billion one generation later, all of them to be fed — all these are necessary but will not take place automatically. They are challenges which demand joint global action in an interdependent united world. And if that action does not take place, then indeed survival is at stake.

Of course this has been said many times already: by scientists, by United Nations expert groups, by the Brandt Commission, at our previous Assembly, and on many other occasions. And interdependence has become official jargon already. All ministers of all countries addressing UNCTAD VI in Belgrade, in June this year, expressed their belief in interdependence and common interests. And nearly all Western politicians explicitly agreed with Mr Clausen, the President of the World Bank, that world economic recovery, including economic recovery in the Western industrialized countries, would be unthinkable without a major economic upheaval in the third world. But it turned out to be just lip service. During the UNCTAD VI negotiations themselves, after the beautiful speeches in plenary, the rich countries refused to make the resources for such an upheaval available — they even advocated conditions and economic policies, for instance in the framework of the International Monetary Fund, which would strangle developing countries and force them to cut expenditures benefiting their poorest population strata. And the tragedy of the situation is that these developing countries, highly indebted, at the mercy of their rich creditors, hardly dared to demand fundamental structural change, for instance in international financial and monetary relations, let alone a new international economic order. And many delegates of rich countries told us in the corridors that they were very much at ease, because pressure from the South had never been so weak as nowadays.

It again became crystal clear at UNCTAD VI that life in unity is still far away. More work and more bread is not being given by the rich to the poor, just like that. It has to be fought for, it has to be negotiated, like the labour unions did after the industrial revolution in the West. But negotiations only make sense if three conditions are met. There should be a common or mutual interest between the negotiating partners, there should be some degree of equality in power between them, and there should be political will. The common interest between rich and poor in survival is still being overlooked by the rich, or only being paid lip service to. The poor are weak, and lack negotiating power more than ever. And the political will of the forties and the sixties has faded away. The tragedy is that the international economic crisis is parallelled by a crisis of political institutions. Paramount importance is accorded to short-term goals in decision-making. Policy-makers are inclined to shift the burdens from the powerful on to the shoulders of weaker groups. The elites are alienated from their grassroots. In other words, greater weight is given in politics to maintaining power than to fostering welfare.

If these trends are not reversed there will be increasing economic and political insecurity, not only for the weaker countries, or for the poorer population strata, but for the international community as a whole. The international community will be united in insecurity, due to scarcities as the result of inadequate economic policies, due to increasing economic inequalities resulting in violence, due to the arms race, due also to increasing political tensions between super-powers who give higher priority to strengthening and enlarging spheres of influence than to solving global problems, and finally also due to aggressive policies of individual countries who answer all these threats by creating more "Lebensraum" for themselves — territorially and economically, guaranteeing access to scarce resources, to the sea bed, to the Arctics and to space, which undoubtedly will lead them into confrontations with other countries.

Options for reversal

So the trend should be reversed, away from crisis and confrontation to survival and unity. Which options do we have?

We could return to the choices made in the 1940s, when we created a new international economic order as an answer to the then prevailing crisis. This option — I call it "international democratic capitalsm" — would be a step out of the present chaos by strengthening the policy principles and institutions which were established at that time. However, this option would not be in the interest of the poorest countries and of that part of the world's population which presently has only marginal relations with the market.

We could return to the choices made in the 1950s, when the political decolonization started ("international liberalism") and an international community of nation states was shaped, by drawing the economic consequences: the creation of an international social welfare state with the help of international income transfers in the form of development aid. This, however, would not be adequate because it would not deal with the causes of inequality.

We could implement the pleas made in the 1960s, combining international aid with a strategy for international development also containing policy changes in the fields of trade in manufactures and commodities. This option ("international economic democracy") would be a major improvement but still would only imply changes within the framework of the prevailing international economic order.

We could return to the model of the early 1970s by seriously striving, on the basis of economic cooperation between developing countries, towards more collective self-reliance for the South, possibly even some degree of delinking from the North. However, this would imply some confrontation between North and South and would not contribute to a solution of world wide global crises, threats and insecurity.

So the only promising option is one which would enable us to cope with the problems of the 1980s. You may call it a new real international economic order, or international democratic socialism, or life in unity, or a just, participatory and sustainable society.

A role for the church

Can the church play a role in this? Yes, indeed. To negotiate and build a system which guarantees work and bread for all should not be left to bureaucrats, technocrats and diplomats. It can also not be left to the politicians, not only because of the political crisis which I mentioned, but also because such a system needs an additional dimension. In the words of Thomas Becket, in T. S. Eliot's "Murder in the Cathedral":

> Temporal power, to build a good world
> To keep order, as the world knows order.
> Those who put their faith in worldly order
> Not controlled by the order of God
> In confident ignorance, but arrest disorder,
> Make it fast, breed fatal disease,
> Degrade what they exalt.

That is indeed what happened in the seventies, after twenty-five years of worldly order with fatal disease. That is what must be avoided in the remaining years of this century.

The church can help because it is a value guardian. Values such as survival, social justice and an equitable sharing of resources are easily forgotten during negotiations. Churches can constantly highlight their crucial significance.

Churches are people's movements which can challenge power, act as vanguards and advocates for change. That is essential, because people, and in particular the poor, are easily forgotten during negotiations.

During the last ten years we have talked and negotiated about work and bread, about welfare and development, but the basic values and the fate of poor people have not been on the agenda. One could argue that this will always be the case and that any effort to negotiate more work and more bread for more people will be a waste of time. I agree that people's participation at the grassroot level is a *conditio sine qua non.* It is an essential but not a sufficient condition, because the unequal distribution of power together with the rapid technological revolution of the last couple of decades has given the elites at the top a nearly unsurmountable advantage over the people at the grassroots. Action at the grassroot level may help to challenge power, but should go hand in hand with actions to influence that power. Life in unity requires meticulous and dedicated action at all levels, as a movement of all people. Moreover, life in unity should not only be seen as the aim of a process, as its final outcome. It should also characterize the process itself.

Sharing work and bread with each other, and with the yet unborn generation, is an ethical ecumenical mandate. It always has been. But in the past the implementation of the mandate was not a matter of survival, today it is.

Moving Towards Participation

Called to Life

Elsa Tamez

All of us here are involved in one or another of the many different struggles which are going on: women, blacks, children, old people, young people, native people, disabled or whatever. Each of these struggles is distinctive in its own way, yet running through all of them is the continuous thread of discrimination, marginalization in society, in many cases on two accounts — because the people concerned are poor and disabled, women and black, etc. In other words, the factors of social class, race, sex, physical condition, age combine to produce yet greater oppression.

Another thread of continuity in these struggles, running parallel to marginalization, is participation, the positive side of the coin. This effort is common to all the separate struggles and it is therefore important to think about it.

What I would like to do now is to show that from the biblical and theological point of view human beings are called to life, they are called to seek life, and they can only do this through participation and struggle. I think here of the African woman who said: "I am because I participate." Human beings are called to participate in the quest for life which at the same time gives life.

Participating in creation

The first chapter of Genesis tells us that God created humankind as male and female. He created their bodies and touched them with the breath of life. He created them in his own image and likeness to live together as partners. The image of God in the one can also be found engraved in the other.

But there is more to life than simply breathing. The Creator gives them the earth so that man and woman can work with their hands and enjoy the fruits of the earth. He gives them the earth so that they may participate with God in the transformation of nature. He also gives them the animals to work with them and to be their food. Human beings have needs which have to be satisfied if they are to go on living; they have to participate con-

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stantly in the building of their world if they are to realize their true potential as subjects in history, responsible for their action. And the Lord gave them another gift, that of creating life like the life which God himself had given them: in the image and likeness of God. They participate in creation as they themselves give life.

Up to this point in the story all that breathes is life and love. God fulfills himself as the Creator by giving life to the world, and human beings fulfill themselves by breathing, participating in creation, working, eating and loving one another to give life. Death and all its horrors are absent: it has no place in the world. Everything is a gift and human beings work for enjoyment and to fulfill themselves as human beings. Parallel to this account there is another one in chapter 3 where a new element is introduced, disturbing the order we have seen. Values are reversed and death comes into the story in the form of sin: a capital sin as a result of which this primal society turns to injustice, moving from equality to domination, from love to hate, from happiness to suffering, from life to experience limited by death. It is the sin of disobedience, the sin of breaking a covenant which had existed between the Creator and humanity. But there is something deeper than that.

In this world of paradise, so the narrator tells us, there were trees of all kinds, trees that were good to eat and pleasant to look at (Gen. 2:9), and in the middle of the garden were two trees: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. All the fruits, including the fruit of the tree of life, were there for the man and the woman to eat; only one was forbidden them and that was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The woman and the man, i.e. humankind, were not to aspire to more than they had, they were not to covet a fruit which did not belong to them. Taking possession of one more tree in order to extend their dominion and wanting to be like gods was *the* great sin in the eyes of God. The accumulation of possessions is sin which leads to death, and the prophets attacked it over and over again.

Humanity is ensnared by the tempting appearance of the fruit shown them by the serpent, the agent of death. Desiring to arrogate to themselves a destiny which is not theirs, they eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. By their action, humanity learned what was good and what was evil, they knew and tasted the bitter flavour of oppression/liberation. Immediately the warning (not the sentence) given by the God of life is fulfilled; values are reversed, there is dominion of some over others, symbolized by the man-woman relation, and life, the gift of God, becomes difficult. Winning food from the earth takes great labour; childbirth, too, is difficult. Here we need to go beyond our text. In other words, when the account tells us that the man dominated the woman, it means something more than that; it means that in society some people dominate others (whites/blacks, rich/poor, adults/children, able-bodied/disabled), a state of affairs which did not exist in the first account. To make the earth productive by great labour means more than sowing with difficulty, it means that in an unjust society it is difficult to participate, to live, to find work and eat the fruits that are produced, and to give birth in pain is to participate with God in the mystery of creating life. It is not simply to suffer at the moment of giving birth in the biological sense, but to suffer in giving birth to life of any kind: a human being, a community, a project.

There are two ways for man and woman in general to face this situation. One possible way is not to participate, not to till the earth, in order to avoid the difficulties; not to give birth, in order to avoid the pain of labour; and to separate, so that one may not dominate the other. This is the way of death. When nothing is produced there is nothing to eat, and we die. When there are no children, life itself comes to an end. If women and men are separate, life is deprived of meaning and they cease to exist because the human being cannot live isolated and alone. Humanity exists in community, in communication, otherwise there is no humanity.

The other way is the way of participation in the struggle for life, accepting the challenge to live which comes to us from the Lord of History. It means accepting the gift of life which God gives to us but which requires us human beings to participate in the struggle for it. It means making the earth produce, transforming nature, even when it requires a costly search for the best ways to make the earth yield its fruits *for everyone* (participation means solidarity, *koinonia*); engendering life, creating better opportunities for life despite the pain of labour, and continuing to search for the way to give birth, to build life without so much pain; living together as men and women, black and white, old people, young people, struggling together and loving one another (for community is formed through struggling and loving) and never to stop looking for ways of avoiding the domination of some by others. All this is what struggling for life, creating true life, means. The Lord wants us to win the tree of life, he wants *everyone* to win it by participating in the struggle.

This way of life demands that all members of society should participate. It requires all of us to join in the struggle because death is an obstacle on the path which leads to life. It will bring confrontation between life and death, but in the end life will win. When all participate in the tilling of the soil or in giving birth, whether to children, communities or cooperatives, life will be produced. Moreover, the seed of the woman born in suffering will overcome the forces of death once and for all. Genesis 3:15 tells us that her seed will bruise the head of the serpent, the agent of death. This is the promise of God the Creator. And this is the guarantee given to humanity of all races, ages, physical conditions, male and female, as they move forward in their efforts to participate in the struggle for the good of all. Only by doing so will humanity win the right to eat of the tree of life. God the Creator and Lord of History also left the Garden of Eden to be with them in their quest for life because, paradoxically, he is life, the giver of life, the protector of life. And all living things that are threatened by lack of bread, work, by repression and discrimination or the denial of the right to participate, have God at their side.

Jesus, the way to life

In the pages of the Bible which follow we see that the history of humankind, exemplified in the people of Israel, is a story of oppression and liberation (Israel is oppressed, is liberated, becomes the oppressor, and then becomes oppressed again by alien empires, etc.) It is a story of a God who is ready to hear the cry of those who are oppressed and discriminated against, whose lives are threatened, and who is ready to help them.

Throughout the fluctuations of history, God decides to draw closer to humankind to show them more clearly the way of participation which leads to life, because the darkness of death is so thick and deluding that people have lost their way. God the Creator becomes human in Jesus, he becomes a way on which people can see truth and life in bodily form.

But he does not appear from nowhere. He is born of a woman, a poor woman who is participating in the struggle for life and in giving birth to him suffers the pains of childbirth. Thus, God, appearing in Jesus from among the poor and marginalized in history, experiences all the hardships and joys of those who participate in making life possible.

In his deeds and spiritual teaching Jesus attempts to reverse values: where there is inequality, he calls people to equality (as in his encounter with women, Samaritans, the poor, the sick, widows, children, old people, etc.) Where there is hatred, he calls people to love; where there is war, to peace; where there is hunger, to sharing; where there is injustice, to justice; where there is despair, to hope; where there is no participation, to participation. Jesus marked out the way with his own life and became the way to life. He taught us to love and to participate in the way leading to life. He taught us to love and to struggle. Love and struggle are the two things we must do at a deep level to make the kingdom of life visible, to fulfill the great commandment given to Christians to love God and our neighbours as ourselves. To struggle without love is not a course of action for Christians, nor for good revolutionaries, and to love without struggling, without claiming the right to participate, without dotting the "i"s, is not real loving. In participation leading to life in its fullness, we struggle for life, and at the same time we produce life, as at the moment of childbirth.

The life of Jesus Christ here on earth is an example to us, and we could say that the sufferings of Jesus Christ on the cross were similar to the pains of a woman in childbirth. In these moments of acute pain, when we go down to the threshold of death, we are struggling against death.

Jesus passed over the threshold of death, not in order to come to terms with it, but to defeat it finally (Col. 2:13). In Jesus we see fulfilled the promise that the woman's seed will bruise the head of the agent of death. Jesus bruised its head in rising from death and conquering death, and he thus brought to birth the possibility of a new humankind, new women and new men. But he demands that we be truly converted to become new people, who are no longer oppressors or racist or sexist or practise discrimination. He demands a conversion which sets us on our way in search of a new way of being human, of being a man or a woman.

Four aspects of participation

I should like to summarize the above four important aspects of participation.

1. *Participation means becoming human.* It is a call to life. If people do not participate, they do not exist. When people participate, they become their true selves, they feel that they are fulfilling their God-given vocation as men and women: to rule the earth, to till it, to enjoy its produce, to be fruitful and multiply, in short, to transform nature and to make history. Human beings become their true selves as they participate in creating as historical subjects, as opposed to objects which do not make history. Participating is what gives life meaning.

2. *Participation inevitably implies involvement with others.* The word "participation" implies the presence of our fellow human beings, subjects just as important as myself, having the same rights and duties as all, without exception. If one person does something by herself, it does not necessarily follow that she *participated* in doing it. All you can say is that she did it, made it, etc. If we say that someone *participated* in creating an object, a poem, a cooperative, or a festival, then it follows necessarily that we are referring to other people who also participated in the creative act. To participate in the Lord's Supper implies that I am one among others in sharing the bread, and that we have a common cause in solidarity.

3. *Participation implies creating something new for all.* Participation for participation's sake is meaningless. There must be a goal, an aim to participating, and the priority aim is the common good, the wellbeing of the poor and marginalized, those to whom Yahweh according to the Bible devotes his special attention. Participating implies solidarity, in the sense of creating the best opportunities for life so that all can live life in dignity as persons. Here we confront the great problems of our world: poverty, hunger, unemployment, repression are all problems which are very acute in the third world where the majority of the world's population live. Meeting basic needs is absolutely essential and thus participating and meeting basic needs are two things which cannot be separated — they belong together. The meeting of basic needs is absolutely essential, but participation gives meaning to our life. It is a question of both the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand and of seeking the bread of life (John 6) at one and the same time, a way of living which does not look for substitutes for actual bread, but which does give meaning to life as well.

4. *Participation implies struggle.* That is so for two reasons:

a) Because to till the earth, to make it fruitful is no easy task. It requires strength, devotion and dedication.

b) Because there are people and oppressive structures which are opposed to participation by others and attempt to stifle participation for selfish economic and political reasons, and do not seek the wellbeing of the marginalized majority of the people. Power is in their hands and they have a monopoly. And thus sections of society become marginalized on the basis of class, race, sex, handicap, or age, and are denied the natural right to participate. The struggle for participation must take the form of a "yes" to life and a "no" to marginalization. Jesus' deeds in history show us how he struggled to draw the marginalized and oppressed of his day into society.

Life is a gift from God, which the Lord challenges us to receive, and we receive it through participation, by confronting death and bringing life to birth at each step of the way, driven forward by the life force which God has given us by making us in his image and likeness, and by the hope that Jesus has left us his Spirit, who values, defends, questions and drives us, so that we devote ourselves to participation in the struggle for life until victory is ours.

A Youth Perspective

Livingston Thompson

The account of creation in Genesis 2 gives a very profound image of man participating in God's created order. Having made the beast and the birds, God brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. The author sees Adam's sense of personhood and being as resting in his ability to participate actively in the creation of things. Things in the world have their relevance and importance determined by man and woman participating in their creation. Participation is the means by which we share in the ongoing creation of the world.

Moving towards participation, therefore, describes the action of reaffirming this God-given ability, capacity and responsibility to share. The inability to participate, whether by choice or unfair play is a prescription for non-being. Moving towards non-participation describes the process of dying, of being killed.

Participation does not ask questions about sex, age, or context. The most important consideration for participation is the fact of being human and alive. God's love for the world, his act of participation in human life was further expressed in the person and work of Jesus Christ: as the word became flesh and dwelt among us. So God himself is committed to participation, real participation.

The minute the word participation is used, one is immediately moved to ask: "participation in what?" or "what kind of participation?" Critical analysis of our world will have a significant bearing on these questions, revealing that persons by virtue of their sex, their age or their context are prevented from participation in a real way.

My own church is guilty of making persons spectators rather than participants in the worship experience of the life of the church. The form of worship, the liturgy, the music tend to be unrelated to the experiences of the congregation. The words of the hymns we sing and the words of set intercessory prayers reflect very unfamiliar experiences and life-styles. The

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more liturgical traditions are guilty of stifling a free expression of one's experience of God. Rituals at times seem to be an end in themselves, rather than a means to a closer walk with God. Ultimately, some persons are excluded from a deep and meaningful relationship with others in the church.

It is sad to say that my denomination (and many others in the WCC) has not set an example for the world at large as to how power and responsibility must be shared. As is the case in governments, so we compete in the church. We lobby in order to get as many persons as we want on the committees, be it a central committee or a peripheral committee. The objective is not participation, it is not shared responsibility, but power and control. Moving towards participation is an act of maturity. An act in which I am not threatened by the presence of another.

One of the most dehumanizing phenomena of the age in which we live is the lack of participation in society. The criteria for participation are decided by a few. Morever, these criteria, though they may be informal, are supported and continually reinforced by succeeding generations. We can look at a society like that of India where the caste system sets boundaries on potentials. We can look at the apartheid system in South Africa or dictatorships in many third world countries. Everywhere there are dehumanizing influences based on unfair and unjust participation or on non-participation.

Let me conclude with an example from my area, to bring the point home. Close to the community in which I work, there is a bauxite plant which has been in operation for a number of years. Very few persons from the area have a chance to find work at the plant, even doing cleaning jobs. Moreover, the private school established by the plant is not intended to train the local community, but the children of the expatriate workers. At the same time, houses in the community are rotting away as a result of exhaust and pollution from the plant. Thus even that which the poor have is taken away.

Women and Participation

Olivia N. Muchena

I come from Zimbabwe. Traditionally, the African woman, like women in many parts of the world, was not part of public life activities. Rather, she sought and did manage to influence the affairs of the family and community indirectly in all sorts of ways, including some very subtle ones. The belief in this tradition of subtle and indirect influence is still so strong that

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those women who dare to participate directly are often regarded as deviant or domineering.

While my cultural background is African, my personal experiences are very much Zimbabwean. In the struggle for liberation, women and men participated both at the frontline and on the home base. Given the situation of male migration in Zimbabwe, rural women perhaps much more than any other group participated on a daily basis not only in sustaining the struggle but also in the raising of consciousness about the political situation. The effect was that women emerged from the period of the struggle more confident and articulate than ever before.

On attaining independence a Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs was established to facilitate the emancipation of women and to promote their full and effective participation in the development of that society. While it is too early to assess the impact of that ministry, two things are quite apparent. First, the public debate on how and in which aspects of life women should fully participate has assumed unprecedented proportions. Every day the debate goes on in the radio, press, television, in buses, social gatherings and sometimes in the church. Secondly, in the churches, the debate revolves round the issues of the structures, the teaching and attitudes of the church towards women's participation in the church. Replies to questions put to women in church groups in preparation to this Assembly have led me to the conclusion that churches as perceived by women (rural and urban) are not yet effective instruments in promoting participation. A woman from a rural area said in response to whether or not the churches should contribute to government efforts in changing the situation of women:

> Whether we like it or not, I do not see how the church can be involved in this matter. Government is concerned about the things of this world while the church is concerned about the heavenly kingdom. Who are we to change the teachings of God through the Bible?

The woman concluded by citing Ephesians 5:22-26, 1 Corinthians 11:3 on the authority and responsibility of husbands over their wives. Another woman saw it differently:

> Yes, we women are the overwhelming majority of members. It means we are the church. But how do you propose that we dismantle the church structure, so that women may also participate at all levels of the church.

I had no answer. But it was with these types of discussions and concerns in my mind that I came to the Sixth Assembly.

During the pre-Assembly women's meeting we prepared ourselves for full and informed participation in the Assembly. That objective is being achieved to a certain extent at this Assembly. Now the question we should address is this: How do we make our local churches places where we prepare women and men for full and effective participation? What resources are needed at the World Council level to help churches become participatory institutions at local level?

According to Philip Potter's address to this Assembly:

> The world will be watching us to know whether we will meet the test of being truly a house of living stones, built on the rock of faith in God who wills peace

> for all, and the rights of *all* to be *fully* themselves whatever their creed or sex or race or class or nation.

The image of a house of living stones is particularly significant to me as a Zimbabwean. Zimbabwe means houses made of stones, a reference to the stone houses our ancient kings used to live in, now known as the Great Zimbabwe in the South East of that country. The women whom I consulted before coming to this Assembly will be eagerly waiting to hear how my experiences here will contribute to their having a fullness of life through their churches. I hope, sisters and brothers, that, as we deliberate on the issues of women and participation, we can constantly remember that although women make up the majority of our congregations, they have been ignored, neglected stones. We here have a responsibility to see to it that these stones become active, alive and achieve fullness of life through full and effective participation in the church.

Healing and Sharing Life

The Obligation of the Church to Share

Kyaw Than

Jesus feeding the multitudes

All four Gospels contain the story of Christ's feeding of the multitudes (Matt. 14: 13-21, 16: 13-20; Mark 6: 30-44; 8: 1-10, 27-30; Luke 9: 1-6, 10-22; John 6: 1-14). Note that in Mark and Luke this miracle is preceded by the reference to the evangelistic tour of the twelve disciples. They had been sent out as members of six visitation teams and came back with great joy to report to Jesus about their team visits. They had shared the good news and had experienced the power of healing.

They needed rest after the exciting and strenuous tour, and Jesus took them with him to a lonely place to get some rest. But their healing and preaching had made people very eager to find Jesus and to ask for help in their diverse needs. Mark observes that the people could recognize the faces of the disciples and came running from all the towns on foot to get to the place for which the disciples were heading.

Following the story of the feeding of the multitudes, Mark and Luke offer the account of the confession of Christ by Peter in Caesarea Philippi. Thus the healing ministry of the disciples and the sharing of food with the multitudes were followed by that great confession about Jesus by Peter. The account of the sharing with the people is set within the context of healing and of confession. Healing, sharing and confession are all inseparably linked together.

The disciples had healed the diseases of the people and told them about the kingdom that had come among them. Now the people want more of their service. The scriptures say they literally ran on foot from the towns to the disciples and Jesus to get their needs met. And they stayed on till the disciples got worried about the lateness of the hour.

It was an interesting situation. People had come with all kinds of needs and expectations. The disciples were anxious. Time was running out. In their view they had no responsibility for these people and they had no resources to share with them. All they could propose was advisory and consultative services to direct the multitudes to known centres of board and

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lodging for the night or to likely places where they might get food. But Jesus pointed out to them the obligation to share! Jesus was asking of them something quite impossible. He asked that the disciples themselves meet the need of the multitudes, that they get the people something to eat. You'll note in the accounts of Mark and John that there was a preoccupation with *funds* on the part of the disciples. Apparently they concluded that there could be no sharing unless it could be worked out in financial terms! A *denarius* during those days represented a whole day's wage for a labourer. The disciples calculated that a whole day's wage of some two hundred labourers could not have provided the financial means to secure the bare necessities of the multitude. But Christ had said that they must take care of the need of the multitude! The Lord was making impossible demands of his disciples.

Some exegetes think that the important aspect in the miracle was not necessarily the quantity of the food multiplied but the change of heart in those who had brought food with them. They were induced to follow the example of the youth and to bring out what they would have protectively kept for their own consumption; they placed them at the disposal of their neighbours, sharing their resources with others, so much so that there was even surplus — twelve baskets of it.

This is not to deny that Christ had power to increase the meagre resources of human beings in a given situation. After all he is the Son of Almighty God. But the impressive point about this interpretation is that the hearts of those who had resources to share were touched and changed by the power of Christ. We must also underline the point that it was not the elders, the wise and the calculating people, but rather a *youth* who volunteered to share the resources he had. We must also note that Matthew refers to the number of people in terms of male adults, about five thousand men, not counting women and youth! The implication here is that the community that was created and fed was surely much much more than the five thousand registered!

We might also note that the feeding proceeded in a systematic way. There was order and not confusion. They sat down in groups by hundreds and fifties. Those who were in need were not just told to go and grab whatever they could find. There was grass and they were asked to sit down in an orderly fashion, and they were *served.* It was not a haphazard affair. The Gospels record that Christ was particular about the left-overs, the balance — and stewardship.

Implications for the task of sharing

Note the anxiety on the part of the disciples. They formed a negligible minority but they had tasted the power of Jesus. Had they not returned from an exciting tour of towns and villages carrying out the ministry of healing and teaching? Yet they could not help being anxious about the conditions of need they saw around them. They were calculating primarily in terms of financial resources. Through an innocent youth Christ taught them the *possibility* of sharing even when they had calculated that the resources were non-existent or meagre and inadequate. The interpretation referred to earlier about those in the multitude who were converted to share with others says much for us in our time about our obligation to share even if we feel what we have may not be sufficient to go round or important enough to be shared with our neighbours. Neither selfish calculation nor misplaced true humility will serve the purpose of sharing.

W. A. Visser 't Hooft has often described the ecumenical movement as the common market of the *charismata*. There are varieties of gifts and every church and every Christian has something by way of gifts of grace to share with others. The World Council of Churches is essentially an attempt to manifest "the economy of the *charismata*". The churches are called to share and receive from each other the diversities of gifts of grace they had received from Christ for service and witness in the whole world. I would like to define the term "economy" here as "a method or stage of God's dealing with humankind". Sharing in the churches is for the sake of the world. The churches in receiving countries, however, often question why so much of the resources available should not come to them instead of the multitudes. Hence sharing is often thought of in terms of sharing *among* the churches rather than of sharing within society at large. If it became obvious that the sharing has to be with those outside the churches, churches in the receiving countries might be *channels* for such sharing, but other channels could be set up by them or be accountable to them. I hope I will not be misunderstood. I am not saying that the churches in receiving countries cannot or must not be *involved* in the process of sharing.

We should also underline that while material resources may be dominant when we talk about sharing, we must never forget the non-material resources, such as skills, experiences and insights out of particular cultures or traditions. These resources can be shared by affluent as well as materially poor sections of the church universal. It is not only what *we have* but also what *we are* that can be authentically shared. We are all familiar with the story of the blind man and the cripple. The blind man carried the seeing cripple and this cooperation of the two disabled persons enabled them to overcome their disabilities as they gave and got mutual assistance to go where each had wanted to go.

One purpose of the ecumenical movement is to facilitate the traffic of the *charismata* and to break down the tariff barriers or visa problems between and among the churches in their journey of service and mission in the world. Anarchy in the economy of grace makes the confessing task of the church that much more difficult and its message unconvincing in the world. When the Asian Missionary Support Fund was set up it became a stimulating and challenging instrument for the churches which were members of the Christian Conference of Asia (the East Asia Christian Conference at that time) and their partners. The area of need may be in a traditionally Presbyterian region. The personnel offered to meet the need may come from another tradition in another Asian land.

The material resources needed to supplement what is already but insufficiently available in the receiving country may be given by yet another tradition. Thus the Church of South India might offer the personal gifts, skills and experience of a couple from its membership for service in Thailand where the church has a Reformed tradition.

Sharing of resources may be just for relief of an immediate need in a specific situation, but our ministry in the name of Christ will always seek to bring wholeness to the life of persons and renewal to the structures.

In sharing our resources some churches would rather emphasize *justice* while others might give special attention to *missionary outreach.* Yet other partners in the fellowship of sharing might give priority to traditional ongoing service efforts of the church. Separation in practical programmes or projects may be necessary but there is uneasiness among the receiving churches or bodies when the sharing of resources seem to be accompanied by influence of the donor churches or agencies to get certain programmes or projects underwritten. The question then arises as to how "mission" or "service" concepts are defined and who decides whether these could not be combined as far as the context and understanding of the receiving church is concerned.

What needs to be re-emphasized is that assistance from partner churches should no longer perpetuate old separations or create new divisions. Its purpose must be to enable local forms of joint action. During those days when the lists of projects needing ecumenical support were presented on pink papers, the late D. T. Niles made a distinction between block grants and contributions towards items of projects on the pink lists. He was talking about the need for adult relationships between partners, over against relationships as between benefactors and beneficiaries. The mission agencies had in many places gone beyond the benefactor/beneficiary relationships. We must ask whether the service and development bodies with larger resources may be forgetting or ignoring the former problems of partnership in obedience that the churches and missions of the past period faced. Taking another example from the area of faith and order we must listen to the cautionary remarks about the increased complexity of the task of ecumenism these days. Reference was made to different types of ecumenism viz the concern for unity among confessions; the concern for unity among groups who seek renewal of the church through action and struggle as contemporary challenges for Christian witness is faced. Yet a third trend expresses the concern for crystallizing their unity among those holding similar theological persuasions.

Are we facing a series of divisions in the realm of the church's *diakonia,* some emphasizing cooperation in evangelistic outreach, others emphasizing action networks and renewal groups, and yet others attending to less radical channels of participation in nation-building? And are these emphases reinforced in their separateness because of the resources from outside?

The churches have an obligation to share. The act of sharing is only a response to that supreme sharing God has done in Christ, once for all in history. But we continue to benefit from the fruits of that supreme sharing of God. The *kenosis* of Christ is the ultimate sharing of God for the fullness of life for his creation.

Called to Heal

Sylvia Talbot

Jesus Christ, the Life of the World, is also Jesus Christ, the Healer. He healed with authority in his own name and that healing is manifested in many forms in the daily lives of God's people. Like the suffering slaves who had experienced Christ, we can respond to Jeremiah's cry: "Is there no balm in Gilead?" with faith and conviction: "There *is* a balm in Gilead."

Tuning in on the same wavelength

One of the problems is that we are not always on the same wavelength when we discuss healing. Salvation, health, healing, community, wholeness, all words which we use frequently defy well-defined boundaries. Words commonly used, yet not commonly understood, their meaning and use reflect the perspective of the speaker and the context in which they are used.

In his address to the 1982 Central Committee meeting, Philip Potter, General Secretary of the WCC, had this to say about health and salvation:

> Healing means salvation and peace. In Hebrew, Greek and the other Indo-European languages, salvation has the meaning of integrity, integralness, authenticity, fullness, wholeness, realized totality. The person saved is freed from all alienating elements, and is authentically himself/herself. Peace, *shalom*, has a similar meaning of wellbeing, wholeness, having the strength to be oneself. And what is true for one person is true for the whole community, and indeed for the world, as the prophets saw. And healing is associated with righteousness (Isa. 58: 8), that right relationship with God and with our fellow human beings which makes for a true community of sharing.[1]

The concept of salvation as *shalom*, a personal yet social wholeness and wellbeing, does not detract from the message of individual deliverance from sin and death, but emphasizes wholeness and harmony which must exist in relationships. Being in a right relationship with self, with neighbour, and with God is an understanding of health that is also found in Asian and African traditional medicine. And the Swiss psychiatrist, Paul Tournier, speaks of relationships as the "third dimension of medicine".

The worldwide study on the "Christian Understanding of Health, Healing and Wholeness", carried out by the Christian Medical Commission (CMC), proposed a new working definition of health: "Health is a dynamic state of wellbeing of the individual and the society; of physical, mental, spiritual, economic, political and social wellbeing; of being in harmony with each other, with the material environment and with God." This view underscores the totality and integralness of health and hints at the

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[1] Philip Potter, "Healing and Salvation", *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 33, No. 4, October 1981, Geneva, WCC, p. 333.

impossibility of attaining optimal health. We human beings move along a continuum somewhere between imminent death and optimal health.

Connecting the disconnected

In its broadest sense, healing contributes to the health and wholeness of the individual and the society as in the ministry of Jesus when he responds to the needs of the whole person. Because health is about the interconnectedness between God, self, neighbour and environment, it is precisely in those acts which preserve or re-establish this interconnectedness that we experience healing. Healing is to be perceived as part of the creative and redemptive activity of God, truly a sign of the kingdom.

Health in community

The measure of health and wholeness attainable in community will depend heavily on our understanding of the use of power since brokenness in community often derives from the misuse and abuse of power. Jesus' ministry which informs and inspires our own rejects the traditional notion of power, in favour of the notion of power as love. Jesus came as suffering servant, the "wounded healer" (Henri Nouwen) rather than as a ruler and monarch.

In our ministry we are called to heal people. Coupled with the command to "Go... heal" is Jesus' statement about the scope and intent of ministry: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; he has appointed me to preach good news to the poor; he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted and to announce that captives shall be released and the blind shall see, that the downtrodden shall be freed from their oppressors, and that God is ready to give blessings to all who come to him" (Luke 4: 18-19). This classical statement identifies the task of the church as primarily one to bring wholeness to those in need, those "on the edge", the "least of these". In this context, the perception of health as "being in right relationship" suggests that the scope of the healing task extends beyond ensuring that our body systems function properly. Unemployment, being sexually abused, living under a repressive government, being excluded from participation in your congregation become as much health concerns as diabetes and gastroenteritis. Even such disparate concerns as land reform, nuclear disarmament, equitable distribution of medical care, national economic policy can be recognized as health concerns.

The church lives in the midst of interacting experiences of healing and brokenness. People bring into this fellowship their pain, their prejudices, their vulnerability. Its work-style and its life-style thus far have not enabled it to become the source of healing and reconciliation it is called to be. Certain factors of church life, certain traditions, attitudes and actions help to create or maintain barriers to a real and enduring sense of community within the congregation. For example, the hierarchical structure within most congregations, limited participation in worship and decision-making of women and youth, and the inaccessibility and inconvenience of many church buildings for the elderly and persons with disabilities frustrate and nullify efforts to build community.

Love, the motivating force

The specific commission for the healing task of the church originates with Christ's commandment to "love one another even as I have loved you" (John 13:34-35). Jesus preached, *agape*, revolutionary love which embraces all humankind, beyond our immediate family or fellowship to include anyone who is in need, even our enemies. The practice of *agape* is the distinctive characteristic of Christianity. The command to love is not just rhetoric, something one should do whenever it is convenient, but something one must do because one has no choice.

Love compels us to be inclusive. This means developing a social consciousness, working for the transformation of society into a just society, and ensuring the preservation of the dignity and worth of every human being, even at the risk of jeopardizing our security, our health or our status. Jesus warned that suffering was a condition of healing. He himself suffered to heal the world (Isa. 53:5).

Speaking from their own personal experience of exploitation and oppression, participants in the regional conferences on "The Christian Understanding of Health, Healing and Wholeness" agreed that justice was the social dimension of love and strongly urged the church to "find a way of being loyal to the gospel which runs counter to a politico-social situation..." The issue of social justice is a major one for the ministry of the church, yet, more often than not, it is carefully avoided. What does being in solidarity mean? How does one clarify the concept of being a part of the world in order to be an instrument of healing and at the same time being apart from the world in the sense of not cooperating or collaborating with the forces of evil? What are the implications for the healing task?

Traditionally, the church has been deeply involved in healing activities motivated by the model of the Good Samaritan and associated with what is done *for* and *to* people during their episodes of illness. Surveys have shown that church-related medical work in selected countries in Asia and Africa had little impact on personal and community health problems. They also revealed that human and financial resources were used in treating diseases almost exclusively with little if any effort in attacking the root causes of disease. The traditional model of hospital-based, disease-oriented, patient-centred care has become ineffective and unjust. Fewer than 15 per cent of the population benefit from hospital-based care — basically those who are able to get to the institution and to pay for treatment. More than 50 per cent of those who do receive treatment suffer from illnesses that could be treated outside the institution. A large number of those treated return again and again to be treated for the same condition because little or no attention is given to disease-prevention or attacking the root causes of diseases.

From its inception the CMC has enabled and supported innovative health programmes. It continues the search for a more effective, more just approach to meeting basic health needs such as primary health care. Primary health care is a way of addressing the injustices of the present medical care system. It is not an alternative to institutional care but for the present the most sensible approach to meeting unmet health needs of the masses. It is in a sense an attempt to make medical care services "belong" to those who are served.

My lack of emphasis on medical care was deliberate if only to dramatize the need to internalize this comprehensive view of health and healing which must inform the healing task of the church. But we all recognize that there is a particular dimension of the healing task which require medical, surgical or pharmaceutical intervention as the most effective means in preventing and curing illness. This kind of care must be available and accessible to all and the congregation should ensure that this is so. Pain, suffering, illness and death will not disappear or be eradicated by healing efforts. We must learn to live with these experiences and to meet their demands. The congregation has an important responsibility to help its members to gain a better understanding of grief, death and suffering.

Areas needing attention

First, to live and witness as a healing community requires some understanding of and commitment to the concept. A congregation cannot fulfill its purpose as a healing community unless it lives like one — not as people congregating on a regular basis merely for ritual or relaxation, but as "a living organism in which the parts coinhere both giving and receiving strength and purpose".

Serious study and reflection about the nature, scope and purpose of the healing task needs to be done, ensuring some recognition of the factors and forces which support or deny health and wholeness.

Congregations need to develop good listening skills so that the signal for help will be heard. They must listen to what is happening in the world and be able to interpret its task. Anything inimical to this interdependent world becomes a danger too real to be ignored.

Second, most of us lack the courage to respond obediently to Christ's command. Howard Thurman puts it well. In one of his prayers, he prays:

> God, I need thee
> When the path before me lies
> I see it — courage flees
> I need thy faith.

To respond obediently we must heal although we hurt, and hurt if necessary in order to heal. It is often said that the task of the church must not only be to comfort the afflicted, but also to afflict the comfortable. Awareness, advocacy, confronting the issues, challenging the traditional structures are all hurting exercises, and involve risks.

Confronting Threats to Peace and Survival

Theological Aspects

Heino Falcke

Why was the term "life" chosen as key theme for this Assembly? Like "light" and "reconciliation", "liberation" and "peace", "life" is a key word for unlocking the significance of the salvation in Jesus Christ for the situation of the contemporary world. The special feature of "life", of course, is its elemental character. But the threat which faces the world today is also elemental and radical. Confronted with this threat, we seek to understand Christ as life for the world.

However this theme may be interpreted in the light of the various church traditions, implicit in it in every case is the affirmation that in Jesus Christ we are confronted with the foundation of our existence (the "ground of our being and the granite of it" — G. M. Hopkins) and not merely with some "religious supra-structure", with consciousness *and* being, soul *and* body, history *and* nature.

Can the Christian family rise to its mission to proclaim Jesus Christ as the life of the world in this elemental sense in face of the threats to human survival today? I come from Europe, where in the last century and a half the churches have almost completely failed to rise to the challenge of three elemental questions affecting the very life of society: the question of the first industrial and proletarian revolution, that of war in the form of two world wars, and that of the scientific and technological revolution. All three questions confront us today as *global* threats to survival: as a question of justice in the increasing gap between poor and rich, between dependent nations and powerful nations; as a question of peace in a world stocked with weapons of mass destruction; as a question of the conservation of nature in face of its increasing destruction by the scientific and technological revolution.

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We are specifically concerned here with the third of these threats and its connection with the first. But the scientific and technological revolution is one of the roots of all three threats. What has the ecumenical movement had to say concerning these problems?

Modern science: three problem areas

It has mainly been in its Sub-unit on Church and Society that the World Council of Churches has studied these questions in the past fifteen years or so. Work on the social and political upheavals of our time (theology of revolution) led to the study of the profound revolutionary changes brought about in our world by science and technology. The point of departure here was furnished by the disquieting consequences of the scientific and technological revolution: pollution of the environment, exhaustion of natural resources, limits to growth, the possibility of the biological manipulation of life and, as a particularly explosive issue, the problems of energy, nuclear energy especially.

It was clear from the very outset that these questions could only be clarified in dialogue with the scientists and technological experts. It very soon became plain how difficult this new type of dialogue is both for the theologians and for scientists and technologists, but also how indispensable.

The question for the theologians is how the church can bear witness intelligibly, concretely and relevantly to Jesus Christ as the life of the world if it is unable to say what this means for the science and technology which play so considerable a part in shaping this world. How, moreover, can the church love effectively and practically if it fails to acquire the necessary expertise?

Alarmed by the very consequence of their achievements and the misuse of their discoveries, scientists are compelled to re-examine the foundations and limitations of modern science, its dealing with reality and its role in society.

Three problem areas emerged as the most important:

a) The question of the role of science and technology in society: Modern science saw itself as a value-free exploration of reality, constrained by its very ethos to steer clear of all subservience to extraneous prejudices, evaluations or interests. Its technological application, however, and even scientific research itself had long since become dependent on and even the instrument of economic and political interests and institutions. Science and technology confront us today as economic, cultural and political power. This is the experience of the developing countries in particular. Science and technology are the main instrument of neo-colonialism, reinforcing the dependence of the developing countries on the industrial nations and destroying their cultural identity.

Above all, science and technology confront us as power in the arms industry which — as has often been pointed out — employs almost fifty per cent of all scientists and technologists and has endowed humankind with the capacity to destroy itself.

Science and technology became the power they are because their achievements were valued and desired as aids to, enhancements of, and guarantees for life — in short, as "progress". The increased domination of the world by science and technology threatens now, however, to have precisely the opposite effect and to bring with it a diminution in the quality of life, the destruction of nature and the self-destruction of humanity itself.

It becomes essential therefore to integrate science and technology within a concept of socio-ethical responsibility. For this concept, the three criteria of a just, participatory and sustainable society were developed from the Nairobi Assembly onwards. How are we to ensure in practice that science and technology are brought under the direction and control of these three criteria?

This development marks the decisive turn that has led to the ecological crisis of the present time. Again, it is not a question of eliminating science and technology but of making clear that they represent a very narrow approach to reality to be complemented by being inserted into a meaningful scale of values. The ecumenical critique of this development must envisage three objectives:

— to orient the dialogue between theology and science so as to serve a new perception of reality;
— to maintain an open future for life through solidarity in the midst of conflict;
— to discover the quality of life by turning to justice.

b) The development of science and the extension of our capacities for action as a result of this development confront us with ethical questions for which there is no historical analogy. The discussion centred initially on the problems of nuclear energy and then, with growing urgency, on the new developments in biology (genetic engineering, *in vitro* fertilization and prenatal diagnosis, etc.). Where are we to locate the ethically definable limits to what is feasible here? What constitutes the value of human life? By what criteria do we distinguish between normal and abnormal in prenatal diagnosis? Is not the church under obligation to develop a "theology of life" which is related to the biological understanding of life?

Science can say what exists and what we can do but not what should be and what we are permitted to do. It must therefore be integrated into a concept of values able to guide our action. Value concepts differ from one culture and religion to another. The synthesis of Christianity and Western thought has reached a point of profound crisis and has long been unable to claim a normative role for the whole world. A dialogue between cultures and religions is indispensable.

c) Is not the approach to scientific thought itself responsible for the ethical disorientation as well as for the dominant role of science and technology? Hostility towards science or the romantic dream of a pre-technological world never had a place in the ecumenical debate. On the other hand, the pragmatic technocratic option, based on the assumption that everything can be solved by a few readjustments in technology, is an oversimplification which evades the challenge to a radical revision of ways of thinking.

At the origin of modern scientific thought we find Francis Bacon's dictum "Knowledge is power". René Descartes commended physics as a practical philosophy which enables us to use nature for human ends and thus to become "lords and owners of nature". Modern science, therefore, is a desire to know in order to control and determine; it is a way of thinking which takes the form of power (C. Fr. von Weizsäcker).

The combination of science and technology is therefore characteristic and the fact that they have both become dominant powers in the modern world can be traced back to their initial intellectual approach. Hand in hand with this goes the division of humanity and nature into subject and object. In the scientific and technological approach to nature, the human agent ignores the fact that he is himself part of nature. We turn nature into a thing, intervene as in something alien, subject it to the questions in which we are interested, use and shape it for our own ends. This thinking is characterized by an interest in success and predictable effects but not in unpredictable results and side-effects, strengthened by specialization that perceives only partial aspects of reality but excludes responsibility for the whole.

The dialogue between theology and science, to promote a new perception of reality, seems to be a purely theoretical one. But if a desire for power and possession underlies the way science and technology approach knowledge, a redirection of thought can only be achieved through a conversion of life as a whole, indeed, of culture as a whole. Christianity helped to shape the modern culture of violence. Intellectually, this culture was made possible by a heretical distortion of the *dominium terrae* (Gen. 1:26,28) and by the secularization of this commission with Christian theology as a helpless or uncritical spectator. Hence the necessity for a conversion of church and theology as well as the theory and practice of science and technology.

In the biblical traditions the reality of the creation spoke to those who believed in the redeeming God. Faith heard the language of the heavens, the sunshine and the rain, of the lilies of the field and the sparrows (Ps. 19:1-7; Matt. 5:45; 6:26,28). In its witness to God, the Creator, and to Christ as the mediator of creation, the people of God of the Old and the New Testament engaged in a critical dialogue with other religions concerning the interpretation of this language.

Under the pressure of modern science and technology, this language has been silenced. Reality became the aggregate of things. It could answer only the questions put to it by us humans. It no longer announces meaning. Its goals are dictated by us.

The language of suffering...

Today, however, it seeks to speak in another language, more audibly and urgently. It breaks in on our soliloquy and we are compelled to learn to understand it. It is the language of pain, the complaint of the oppressed, the tortured, the poisoned, the exploited, indeed it is the cry of death. From this new language of nature we learn that the modern Western way of dealing with nature is unnatural, that science and technology only partly understand nature and are not attuned to it. The world is not, in fact, a machine, a factory, a shop (Charles Birch). It is not an object we are free to dispose of as we please in our pursuit and exercise of power. If we learn to understand the language of suffering with which nature today interrupts our self-contained obsession with production and consumption, we may perhaps find an access to reality that is more in accord with its character and more serviceable for life.

Ecology is, so to say, the grammar of this language. It teaches us to understand how the connections of statements are constructed. Theology shows the total context from which this language derives and towards which it is oriented: the contexts of creation, redemption and consummation.

But above all, Christian faith must sensitize us to the voice of suffering. At its heart, it is faith in the crucified Christ, faith in the God who took the sufferings of the world upon himself. This faith, therefore, opens our minds and all our faculties for the suffering of the creation. Amid the tumult of the technological world faith hears the groaning of the creature to which Paul refers in Romans 8: 18. As Martin Luther writes in a comment on Romans 8, faith perceives the cross of Christ in all creatures.

The cross of the son of God who suffers for and with the creation leads us, therefore, to a conversion of our thoughts and perceptions. The concern by which our knowledge is guided is no longer the desire to produce and possess but a sense of responsibility for our fellow creatures. Scientific knowledge becomes participatory rather than dictatorial, impressionable rather than oppressive. In nuclear physics and biology, the indissoluble interrelationship between subject and object in the acquisition of knowledge has been discovered. "If we want to understand life", Victor von Weizsäcker has said, "we must participate in life." The role played by the natural sciences, therefore, will not be that of the spy who reconnoitres nature in order to prepare the way for technological conquest. On the contrary, they will be the champion of nature and train technology to adapt itself to the life-systems of nature. We shall only be able to cope effectively with the threats to our survival if we perceive the sufferings of nature in good time as well as heeding the warnings of threatening crises which these sufferings issue.

... and the voice of hope

At the same time, however, Christian faith also hears the voice of hope in the voice of suffering. The basic question addressed by the Old Testament and New Testament testimony to creation is not: "How did the universe come into being?" but "When the world is torn apart by internal contradictions, riddled with guilt and threatened with chaos, what ensures its continuity and future?" This is why we find at the centre of the primal history the symbol of the Great Flood (Gen. 6-8). The experience of saving grace provided the assurance for the people of God that God preserves creation and ensures its future. The Old Testament bears witness to this in the primal history (Gen. 1-11) and the prophetic promises (e.g. Isa. 11: 1-9), and the New Testament does so in its affirmations of Christ's role in creation (Cor. 1: 15-20 etc.) Through the incarnation and the bodily resurrection of the crucified Lord, the endangered creation is taken up into the promise of future consummation, so that Paul interprets the suffering creation's cry of pain not as the agony of death of the old creation but rather as the birth pangs of the new creation (Rom. 8: 18ff).

These are symbols of promise and hope which acquire elemental import in the crisis of our scientific and technological world. Science and technology are no longer based as a matter of course on a belief in progress. They are dependent on symbols of inner meaning and hope which they are unable to perceive with their own methods, resources and limits, but which place their own efforts within a horizon of meaning. Since it is the will of God to guide his creation to its final consummation, he is engaged in the struggle against the forces of destruction. Science and technology cannot remain neutral, "value-free", in this struggle. To perceive reality in such a way as to deliberately exclude this framework of reference is to deprive ourselves of resources protecting us from the irrational lunacy that abuses rationality for destructive ends.

The common creaturehood of humanity and nature makes them mutually dependent in perception, suffering and hope. Prior to every scientific experiment or technological arrangement of reality we know at the deepest level that we have always existed along with all living creatures and our world and that life has already been granted and is always granted anew in, with and through nature. This basic experience of contingence is revealed as the gracious blessing of the Creator. From it faith learns an elemental confidence in the dependability and meaningfulness of existence, and thanksgiving and praise to God become the basic act of the life of faith. The human being is primarily a receiver and only then a doer. Human identity is not primarily derived from the great achievements of science and technology. These achievements are essentially fragmentary and instrumental to be incorporated into a total perception of the world.

At the same time, faith knows that what we call the "environment" is God's creature which as such has its own value and a hidden relation both to God and to the final goal of creation. The components of this environment, therefore, are not value-free material to which a goal is to be assigned by human valuation.

Because in all creatures we are confronted with forms of the divine action, human beings, according to the biblical witness, need authorization from God to be able to intervene in this area (Gen. 1: 26; 1: 28; 9: 1ff). Respect for the creature therefore becomes part of our perception of the world. There is a secular counterpart to this respect: the wonder which is repeatedly experienced in scientific knowledge of the world.

For an open future

A new perception of nature inevitably leads to a new way of dealing with nature. We need an ecological ethic. Its "categorial imperative" could be stated as follows: "Treat nature in such a way that the future is kept open for life." Or, using the slogan from ecumenical discussion: "Our treatment of nature must be sustainable."

The point we have to start from is the conflict between humanity and nature, which is soberly described in the Bible at the end of the account of the Great Flood.[1] Human beings and the animals threaten each other and kill one another. Within this limiting framework God regulates the continuance of life. There is no return to a paradisiacal peace, nor is that peace a realistic goal of human endeavour. (The future peace of creation promised by the prophets is God's work and the object of human hope.) But God ordains protective measures ensuring the continuation of life in a world of slaughter (Gen. 9: 4-6).

Since biblical times, a complete shift has taken place in the character of the conflict between humanity and nature. Whereas biblical humanity had to wrest what is needed for life from a powerful nature, modern humanity has almost completely subdued nature. The conflict has become extremely one-sided in favour of humanity. In an ecological ethic for today, therefore, the basic imperative is solidarity with nature as the partner in the conflict. Here the key question is the handling of power and the all-important factor is the serving and crucified Christ. We need to rediscover the relevance of the "theology of the cross" for the modern problem of power.

At the beginning of Christ's ministry we find the temptation to use his power to provide for his own needs and promote his own cause, and to inaugurate a world dominion which is demonic in origin (Matt. 4: 1ff.). Jesus rejects this temptation, choosing instead to follow the road of service. He uses his power solely for others and to promote life (healings). He rejects all manipulative use of power but speaks the authoritative word which gives human beings room to make their own free and authentic response as God's creatures. Service of life and liberation for authentic creaturehood — these are therefore the criteria for every exercise of power.

Solidarity and service presuppose empathy. Those who wish to champion the cause of the weak must learn to think and feel as they do, otherwise even good deeds and aid can still turn into a form of imperialism and paternalism. The Golden Rule, which Jesus adopted from the universal tradition of human wisdom, contains an indirect instruction to think from the standpoint of the afflicted person: "Always treat others as you would like them to treat you!" (Matt. 7: 12, NEB). The hearer is to think of how he or she is affected by others and how he or she affects others. Before acting, therefore, a human being should think of him or herself and of other human beings as affected parties. The solidarity of the affected becomes the regulator of action.

This wisdom — certainly not specifically Christian — was suppressed in the scientific and technological civilization. What counts is to be an active agent not a passive recipient, an affected party, to plane the wood and not bother with the woodshavings. Not empathy but apathy, freedom from suffering, is a contemporary ideal of life. To realize this ideal, people wrap themselves in a whole series of protective measures in order to ward off suffering. Jesus once again brings the suppressed common sense of the

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[1] On the following, cf. G. Liedke, "Solidarity in Conflict", an address given to the World Conference on "Faith, Science and the Future" in Boston, 1979.

Golden Rule into the light of day. Only as human beings are prepared to let themselves be affected by the suffering of others are they able to act in a way which promotes life. Jesus underlines the truth of this by his entire life. He identifies himself with the affected, suffers with those who suffer, even to death on the cross.

The cross of Jesus, which was a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks, could provide our scientific and technological world with the wisdom that would help it to survive.

But this wisdom cannot remain merely an attitude of mind. It must also develop methods and structures. In contrast to success-oriented sciences, a "science of the consequences of science" has been called for, one which required its own specific methods and institutions.[2] We also require political structures which permit and encourage empathy. This is the very core of a *participatory* society. In such a society things must be so ordered that the voice of the suffering, including the suffering creation, receives a hearing and influences decisions. But neither of these requirements can be met without a conversion to empathy and it is here that we Christians must take a lead in securing a correction of course in the scientific and technological civilization.

An ecological ethic of solidarity keeps open the future for life. It does so, indeed, precisely because, in such an ethic, humanity abandons the desire to guarantee totally its own future, which is the temptation of Western civilization.

The exploitation of nuclear energy and the creation of nuclear weapons provide the clearest examples today of the way we seek to guarantee our future resources and security and by doing so put our own future at risk.

The future always consists, at one and the same time, of what can be planned and what is beyond our control, of what is a development from the present and what comes to us from the future. This is why the Romans had two words for the future: *futurum* and *adventus*. "Anxiety" was the term Jesus used for the desire to bring the future completely under our own control — an attitude which produces quite the opposite result and fails to make the future secure. But Jesus inspires confidence in the God who comes to meet us. This confidence makes us open towards the future and ready to engage wholeheartedly in the open process of life. By doing so, he liberates from the compulsion to guarantee our own security and sets us free for an empathy and solidarity which assigns justice — including justice for future generations! — priority over our own need for security and provisions (Matt. 6: 33f.). In Rom. 8: 18ff., Paul shows that the hope of Christians is the source and strength of their solidarity with a creation fearful for its future. An ecological ethic informed by this hope is needed today if the future is to be kept open.

Conversion to justice

Inseparably connected with the ecological crisis is the crisis of justice in the growing conflict between North and South. What is at stake in ecological responsibility is justice for future generations.[3] What is at stake in economic policy is justice for our contemporaries. It would be nonsense to treat these two postulates of justice as mutually exclusive.[4] But the two together bring out clearly the whole poignancy of the challenge confronting us today. We are required to establish justice in an overall situation of limited ecological and economic possibilities. As has often been said, we can only achieve this on two conditions. The pervers luxury of achieving security by the arms race must be ended, and the industrial nations must change their system of values and develop economic concepts taking ecological and socio-political criteria into account. This has also been called a conversion from the quantity to the quality of life.

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[2] A. M. Klaus Müller, *Die präparierte Zeit.*

But what exactly do we mean by quality of life? In this connection the Bible offers us a decisive insight. The heart of the quality of life is justice. In the absence of justice, therefore, we cannot achieve a fully qualitative life, a life filled with content and meaning. And justice is not just an ethical demand but something that also endows our life with quality.

Life is defined in the Bible in terms of relationships. At the elemental level, the human being as created in the divine image is related to God and can be fully understood only in terms of this relationship. To this indissoluble relation corresponds our human relationship to our fellow human beings and to our other fellow creatures. At the centre of the Old Testament we find the divine covenant with the people of Israel, and in the person of Jesus Christ, the God-man who gives himself for us, we find a representation of the relationship between God and humanity and between fellow human beings. In this way he is the life of the world.

But in the Old Testament, the central concept of "justice" means doing justice to the community, a behaviour that corresponds to the divinely established relationship between God, human being, and other creatures. Since God's justice consists of his covenant faithfulness, his saving action, the corresponding human justice means one establishing justice and aid for the weak and the oppressed. In these relationships the quality of life is decided. What a human being has or can do depends on the health of the relationships in which life is lived. Wealth can be a blessing thankfully received from God and used in the service of God and the neighbour. But it can also be the result of injustice and an instrument of oppression. It can hinder discipleship and fall under the condemnation of the woes of Jesus. Poverty can be suffering, an unbearable hindrance to life, social injustice, for whose removal we can pray and struggle with God's blessing. But poverty can also be self-giving and sacrifice in the footsteps of Christ, and therefore a supreme quality of life.

The Bible thinks neither in idealistic nor in materialistic terms. It thinks in terms of living relationships. The wisdom literature uses quite everyday and even banal terms: "Better a dish of vegetables if love go with it than a fat ox eaten in hatred" (Prov. 15: 17, NEB). Communion takes precedence over consumerism. What determines whether communion is achieved or not is whether labour and consumption acquire human or inhuman characteristics. It is not just the gross national product which determines the quality of life of an economic system, but the socio-political relationships. It is not merely immoral but an illusion for industrial nations to imagine that they could maintain or even raise their quality of life without establishing just relationships with the third and fourth worlds. The domestic crises of the Euro-American civilization and the power conflict between East and West are already a symptom of the truth that the lack of justice and the absence of quality of life go together. The Old Testament prophets saw their people threatened because it trusted in "horses and chariots" and oppressed the poor and the downtrodden, the "widows and orphans" (Isa. 1: 17,23; 30: 15ff.; Hos. 1: 7; 14: 4). Both warnings fit the industrial nations today with alarming aptness. To deal with the threats to survival means, therefore, above all, being converted from trust in violence and converted to justice towards our fellow human beings and our fellow creatures.

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[3] Cf. Hermann E. Daly, "The Ecological and Moral Necessity of a Limitation of Economic Growth", paper read at the world conference on "Faith, Science and the Future" in Boston, 1979.

[4] Cf. C. T. Kurien, "A Third World View", *ibid.*

Experiment or Disaster?

John M. Francis

Knowledge that comes from scientific investigation is a gift from God. But we can only gain access to this knowledge through the integrity, discipline and openness of mind of practising scientists, technologists and engineers. Despite the great advances in physics and mathematics, in biology and genetics in this century we are still at the edge of understanding so that many recent developments in computers or in the manipulation of the living cell will come to be regarded as little more than useful first steps in the direction of new technologies. We struggle forward continuing to confront the world of nature — its triumphs and disasters — and at the same time accepting that the growth of knowledge brings with it an endless chain of new questions about the universe and about ourselves — our souls as well as our minds and bodies.

It is in the nature of progress that we shall continue this journey of discovery, constantly challenged and amazed by our mastery of science and technology but increasingly humbled by our failure to acknowledge the essential spirituality at the centre. For in probing deeply to the centre of creation it is arguable whether we can expect to enhance our understanding of life itself.

This is the source of the real challenge for a scientific age. Despite our limited understanding of nature, we have acquired immense technical skills which should allow us to confront the real problems of the future:

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- — the ability to feed, clothe, house and provide medical care for 4 billion people in the world: it can be done;
- — the ability to overcome superstition, ignorance and fear with life-affirming choices: with scientific knowledge we can turn the world upside down and make it a far better place in which "to be".

While this is the kind of inspiration that we can draw from the present state of our knowledge, we can go further.

The great experiment

There is a fundamental law of experimental science which directs *all* scientists — whether nuclear physicists, molecular biologists, metallurgists or chemists — to proble deeply into the nature of matter, the living cell, the universe itself. This law can be stated quite simply: "Do not hold back."

We are all familiar with the results of this continuing journey of discovery. Scientists have indeed become the new priesthood; the pursuit of scientific knowledge will mark this period in our history as the era of the great experiment. The scientific literature abounds with talk of "the latest breakthrough", of "unifying theories" and of "advances towards the science and technology of the twenty-first century". This year of our Lord — 1983 — is no exception since the march of science is both formidable and relentless. Let us search the first weeks of the first month of this year for an example of what I have in mind.

At 3.00 p.m. on 21 January the European Laboratory for Particle Physics (CERN), Geneva — only a few kilometers from the Ecumenical Centre — announced that their experiment "UA1 has singled out five events in a total of one thousand million collisions revealing the expected signature of the charged W boson". There are four forces controlling the universe — electromagnetic, weak nuclear, strong nuclear and gravitational. A number of eminent theoretical physicists predict that these forces are not entirely separate but are interlinked. Although the idea of a unified single force is not proved by the results of this experiment, tangible proof of the existence of the W vector boson provides a "vital link between the electromagnetic force and the weak nuclear force".

This is the stuff of which sub-nuclear particles are made. The unapproachable inner world — a word of "hadrons" and "quark symmetries" — a world where scientists themselves can only journey through a fierce mixture of tenacity, immense technical skill and faith in the scientific enterprise. For indeed CERN has become the Sanhedrin of Pure Science and the acolytes who travel there to conduct their experiments are the High Priests of this century.

In the space of a mere hundred years or so the growth of scientific knowledge has surpassed all expectations. Scientists have not held back. They have not attempted to stem the tide of human progress. With the evolution of scientific knowledge has come the capacity to control and even to conquer much human disease and misery, the ability to produce food and medicines — although this is not matched by an ability to ensure that this reaches those often in greatest need, the power to unlock vast sources of energy, both renewable and non-renewable, and inevitably, as part of the Faustian bargain, the ultimate power to destroy the whole of creation.

With some credibility, I think we can say that we have left behind the worlds of Galileo and Newton, recognizing that without these great classical figures of science there could have been no discrete evolution of science as we know it. Even Charles Darwin contemplating "The Origin of Species" on the date of its publication in 1859 could have had no insights on the molecular structure of the living cell or on the information encoded in the DNA molecule. Coming back to the present I should of course not wish to leave you with the illusion that all scientific endeavour is conducted on such an esoteric plane. And that is where the scale of a particular scientific activity or investigation becomes critically important because it is bound to influence the scientist's own perception of the world outside the laboratory.

I have spoken about the era of the Great Experiment but even within the scientific community there is a rising awareness of a new tension over the public face of modern science and technology. The prevailing mood is no longer one of scientific triumphalism — "Science can solve all our problems." Instead the promise of more scientific power over nature tends to increase the fears and anxieties that many people entertain about the future. They can barely cope with the process of rapid technological, economic and social change that is already expected of them. A great many scientists are themselves far removed from the realities of life in the latter part of this century. It is therefore reasonable to ask what scientists are doing to make sure that the Great Experiment does not turn into the Great Disaster.

We all recognize that the patterns of world trade and economic development are passing through a period of deep recession. The prospects for recovery involve an inevitable and traumatic transition for many industrialized countries between the "sunset" industries of a previous generation — including the great giants of coal and steel, of metal extraction and metal fabrication — to the "sunrise" industries grouped around the new technologies that miniaturize so many products through the use of microprocessors thereby realizing and releasing a vast range of potential applications in the fields of communications, robotics and automation. This immense challenge from the world of microelectronics coupled with the continuing series of breakthroughs in the biological and life sciences must now constitute the platform on which to create the sustainable technologies that the world will take as commonplace as we prepare to enter the twenty-first century. Such is the capacity of science and technology to transform our physical world and to reveal opportunities for a more hopeful future. I think that it is fair to say that we have moved forward from the enlightenment of the sixties and seventies which focused an awareness of environmental problems, of "limits to growth" and of the need for a transition towards a more just and sustainable society. As the world economy struggles to recover we need to be clear as to whether the decisions to be taken over the adoption of new technologies will favour the "life-enhancing" group, building on our knowledge of ecological balance and renewable cycles of energy production and use, or the "life-defeating" choices leading us in the direction of further weapons of mass destruction. Here lie the seeds of the Great Disaster.

Of course we have passed this way before and people of goodwill and a clear conscience have attempted to articulate the concerns of a wider public. In the past leading members of the scientific community have attempted to impress on politicians their desire to hold back but they have never been supported or sustained in such an argument. Take, for example, the views expressed by some of the nuclear scientists working alongside Robert Oppenheimer in 1949 when the technical feasibility of the hydrogen bomb was under consideration: I quote from one of their reports:

> The fact that no limits exist to the destructiveness of this weapon makes its very existence and the knowledge of its construction a danger to humanity as a whole. It is necessarily an evil thing considered in any light. For these reasons,... we think it is wrong on fundamental ethical principles to initiate the development of such a weapon.

We can therefore detect the personal challenge to the social responsibility of scientists, technologists and engineers employed in the many industrial corporations producing both conventional and nuclear armaments. It may be that the churches have been far too reticent in appealing to the collective sense of responsibility of this highly skilled and professional group whose creative energies might very well be harnessed to alternative systems of production. The attempts by some groups of scientists and technicians within the defence industries to introduce and to promote "alternative" corporate plans for a particular company or enterprise are a sign that there is growing unease amongst the workforce in those centres. At such a moment these groups can be threatened with the loss of their jobs and their professional standing as scientists and engineers. These are moments of crisis when the churches acting together in any part of the world should be able to provide support for those prepared to take an active stance in opposition to the continuing development of weapons of mass destruction. If the churches are unable to offer solidarity with these groups then they are not entitled to make public pronouncements condemning such weapons as morally and theologically wrong. In these situations the churches must be prepared to engage in a "ministry of reconciliation" in order to counter the inevitable accusations of naivety and betrayal which will be levelled at those individuals and groups who speak out in opposition to the enormous diversion of resources, both human and material, into weapons production of all kinds.

The mystery and the mastery of science

Those of you who are familiar with the world of science, its systems of belief and its practices, already know that through the application of scientific methods we can study natural phenomena at many different levels. We are not confined to sending beams of protons and anti-protons in opposite directions around a 7 km circular underground track near the Swiss-French border simply to observe the interactions between these particles — however significant that may be for the future of life on this planet. "Big

Science" has its place in the nature of things, but for the most part science is practised in more down-to-earth terms. In other words, most scientists stand back. They have entrusted their colleagues with the responsibility of "pushing back the frontiers" and from time to time they may check on progress. To that extent at least most scientists contribute to faith in the scientific enterprise. They cannot influence or direct its path; they are inclined to leave it to others to ensure that the essential scientific discipline is maintained.

However, we are all conscious that the influence exerted by our scientific knowledge and culture has now permeated to virtually every corner of the inhabited world. If it has not been carried there by working scientists, then it has almost certainly travelled there by means of some technology or other which has translated scientific knowledge into a mundane item of mass production — a tin can, a plastic bottle or a transistor radio. It is therefore reasonable to ask whether science can be controlled or perhaps, what is more relevant, whether scientists themselves might be prepared to exercise more careful choices in the type of science and technology which they are inclined to pursue.

In order to advance their understanding in a particular field of research scientists have to learn to stand back, to observe and record those events which lie within the range of their own techniques and instrumentation. They acknowledge the constraints, and wherever possible the boundary of each experiment is closely prescribed and maintained. Thus the territory of each scientific discipline is carefully marked out and defended.

At no point in the interdependent chain of scientific teamwork is the individual scientist required to exercise a value judgment as to the social acceptance of the risks of this enterprise. Only in recent years have some scientists elected to voice their own fears and anxieties over the nature of a particular development — sometimes at great personal cost to themselves — and have thereby directed the attention of the public at large to the choices that need to be examined in the political arena. In most democratic societies it is fair to say that this expression of social responsibility by members of the scientific community has been welcomed — if not always wholeheartedly. However, it is an important and critical step towards the formulation of a science policy "with a human face".

The scientist's concept of the "mystery and mastery of life" is directly related to this overall goal of a socially acceptable science and technology serving the needs of humanity. The principle is embodied in the statement: "Never underestimate the sacramental nature of matter". Let me remind you of the mastery of the scientist who after all is interventionist by nature.

Scientists can control the fission of heavy atoms and the fusion of light atoms thereby releasing immense quantities of energy. They can manipulate genetic material in the living cell and directly influence the process of natural selection. They can devise machines with artificial intelligence that as yet have not been formally constrained. They have provided theories which throw into question the origin of the cosmos itself. It must also be said that scientists collectively do not hold back from addressing the ultimate questions. For this quest is the very nature of science. And on the same pathway science and faith are drawn together for the first time after centuries of conflict following in the wake of Copernicus, Galileo and Darwin.

I hesitate to say that science and faith could become inextricably intertwined. Yet again the signs are there — plain enough for all to see. It is of course the interpretation of the signs which will always prove to be difficult and the continuing source of much dispute.

Science and society

There are of course many substantial arguments that need to be addressed. It is often said that the pursuit of scientific knowledge leads to a reductionist, materialistic and entirely secular view of the world that is incompatible with faith in Jesus Christ. That is perfectly understandable when we consider that our political, economic and social systems are dominated by assumptions about material growth and prosperity or — on the other side of the coin — the continuing and increasing struggle to survive in an unloving and unheeding world. Under these pressures it is so easy to relegate our spiritual needs and anxieties to the interstices of our lives while we get on with the business of living or of coping with life as best we can according to individual demands and circumstances. The scientist, isolated in the laboratory, is beset by similar doubts and fears about the future, particularly if he or she is constantly confronted by difficult choices and decisions over the direction in which science is taking us. Remember the words of Robert Oppenheimer: "A scientist cannot hold back progress because of fears of what the world will do with his discoveries."

It may be that many scientists would still wish to adhere to this kind of statement so that they can thereby be absolved from the guilt or anger which others can turn in their direction. However I believe that increasingly scientists, technologists and engineers directly concerned with some of the harder decisions are prepared to open up the debate and acknowledge both the gaps in our present understanding and the need for a wider form of democratic decision-making. Wherever this ripple of dissent breaks the surface the churches have the opportunity to become informed and involved in some of these choices. In many cases it is a matter of choice and of collective decision based on a clear understanding of the risks and benefits associated with any new technology emerging from the laboratories.

It is not that we need a doctrinaire system to control science and technology within the political and economic framework but rather that more people should become involved and concerned with the exercise of judgment over the future directions of science and technology. Into this forum they need to bring their own declaration of belief, spiritual and otherwise, so that more balanced and representative decisions can become possible. By this means we could hope to avoid the confrontations which will continue if new forms of technology are imposed upon whole communities without any process of explanation or accommodation. We must recognize the impasse that has been reached in so many different parts of the world, whether over the siting of nuclear missiles, the construction of nuclear and chemical plants, or the location of highways, dams and airports — in fact the entire infrastructure of any industrialized society. In the past the decisions have been remote from the communities directly concerned and the changes to the way of life and means of subsistence of large numbers of people have simply been accepted albeit unwillingly at first. At the other end of the economic cycle the enforced changes resulting from the collapse of traditional industries and the ensuing unemployment has also to be accommodated in due course. Now more and more people are coming to realize that these planning decisions which affect their own lives and that of their families over several generations should be the subject of careful public scrutiny and inquiry. For the churches this is an important and essential way of grappling with the hard decisions of the material world while at the same time providing an opportunity to focus and reinforce other values in a caring and responsive way. This is a further element in the "ministry of reconciliation" which the churches are now called to exercise if the future is to become manageable in any better sense of the word.

My own view is that these problems and choices have to be tackled at a local level. Here the detailed aspect of any proposed development incorporating new technology can be teased out and explored in a fundamental way. It is at this point that scientists, planners and politicians can be brought face to face with the realities of their proposals as seen through the eyes of those most likely to be directly concerned with the consequences of the final decisions. If the churches are able to contribute a perspective and to remind the decision-makers of the spiritual dimension of their concern for the future, then the new streams bringing together science and faith in the face of contemporary issues will be joined in earnest. We shall then be able to put aside the sterile debates on the conflicting philosophical or spiritual assumptions which have added to the conflict between science and faith over many years and plan for a more constructive dialogue between the two respective schools of thought. It has to be said that they still have much in common and far more now than might have been imagined at the turn of this century.

As for the ecumenical dimension of this problem, there is still an immense task stretching forward to provide an overview of the struggle to gain insights at the community level. The communication of experience from one country to another, sharing the insights and the Christian response to the challenge of science and technology will itself provide the basis for continuing commitment by the World Council of Churches over the coming decades. The WCC has not spared itself in the past in identifying this as an ongoing task and I feel sure that this Assembly will also wish to encourage and endorse a substantial programme of further work in this area.

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In this short paper I have attempted to do two things. First, to remind you that every advance in scientific understanding brings with it new threats and new possibilities. Scientists do not hold back on discoveries, but more and more they are anxious to inform a wider public about the consequences of some of this new knowledge and the power it represents. They are anxious to see the choice explored and the decisions made in an open and responsible manner.

Second, the challenge to the churches is to become vigorously involved in this dialogue with members of the scientific community. We have an immense task before us if we are to harness the true power of science and technology to keep the world in peace, to feed the hungry and heal the sick.

That is the measure of the task. How to hold the cup of life full to the brim — with steady hands.

Struggling for Justice and Human Dignity

Biblical and Theological Perspectives

Ulrich Duchrow

In the discussion in the Assembly plenary on the report of Issue Group 6, "Struggling for justice and human dignity", a delegate from one of the wealthy industrialized countries stood up and remarked that there was too much talk in the report about "struggling". He felt that such militant language had no place in a well-balanced ecclesiastical report! It did not perturb him that the word *struggling* already appeared in the title of the Issue Group, or that a growing majority of the world's population have to struggle under the present world economic system (from which he himself benefits) against increasing poverty, nor that every year further millions of people have to struggle against starvation. Of course, there were many others from the industrialized countries whose eyes had already been opened to the seriousness of the situation by the phenomenon of structural unemployment.

The experience and thinking of most of the delegates from all parts of the world had a different tenor from the contribution of their fellow delegate who shied away from struggle. One of the first high points of the Assembly came as early as the second day when Allan Boesak, President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, left his mark on the Assembly with a passionate description of the deteriorating situation in his country, South Africa, and accusing the West of complicity. He declared that justice and peace belong inseparably together and pleaded that the church should speak and act prophetically.

Another example was the extraordinarily moving testimonies from the Pacific. Hardly anyone present was aware of the grim situation of these islands which were once a paradise. Here again, colonialism and neo-colo-

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nialism are closely linked with the very grave injustice being suffered by the local population through nuclear testing and waste disposal. A young woman, who herself had three tumours and was shortly to undergo surgery, implored the delegates to oppose these activities, which are such a danger to life, and to change their ways. Leslie Boseto, also from the Pacific, described in graphic local terms what we would call a confessing church in such a situation. It is like a shoal of little fishes fleeing from a shark. They must all stick together for their individual safety and for the safety of the shoal.

In Issue Group 6 the problem was put thus: since the WCC's Fifth Assembly in Nairobi the churches have increasingly endeavoured to work in all situations in society for a "just, participatory and sustainable society". And yet we must admit today that the world, with few exceptions, has developed in the opposite direction. What are the reasons, and how can the church respond appropriately? What are the powers which determine this development? And what actual examples of ecumenical action can we offer?

The powers and the church

> For we struggle not against human enemies, but against the powers, authorities and potentates of this dark world, against superhuman spirits. (Free translation, Eph. 6: 12)

The biblical concept of the powers has taken on a new relevance today. For in the weapons of mass destruction and in the destruction of nature we are confronted not just with economic, political, legal, technological, social and ethical problems amenable to reason. When people are systematically mutilated, tortured and made to "disappear"; when the machine of our economic system spews out yet more millions of victims of starvation every year throwing yet more millions of unemployed on to the scrap heap; when work is increasingly being depersonalized by robotization; when the women of the poor are violated in organized mass tourism; when our forests are dying because of our "growth"; and when the super-powers, the USA in particular at the present moment, continue their insane arms race — we are looking into the *twisted face of a demonic monster.*

All this raises weighty theological questions. What interpretation should we give to our situation, in our several countries and worldwide? Are we in a situation of "Babylonian captivity"? Or is our situation similar to that of the early Christian communities — faithful, struggling or lukewarm — to which the Book of Revelation was directed? Are the national, international, and transnational powers, supported as they are by the increasingly prevalent ideology of "national security", to be compared to the beasts from the abyss and their followers (cf. Rev. 13 and 18, and Allan Boesak's speech)? To ask such questions does not mean that we have a fixation about these powers, but that we are, on the contrary, learning to overcome them. "For in him (Christ) the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness of life in him, who is the head of all rule and authority" (Col. 2: 9-10).

In the language of the ancient church the lordship of Christ over the demonic powers is established through "exorcism", i.e. driving out the demons. The Orthodox contribution to the Melbourne Conference of 1980 was right to emphasize the twofold role of Christians and churches sent forth into the world from their fellowship with Christ in the eucharist:

— first, the healing of the sick in a comprehensive sense, i.e. helping to heal all individual, social and political disorders and evils;

— but, also, secondly, "the exorcism of the demons, the struggle against the idols, racism, money, chauvinism, ideologies, robotization and exploitation".[1]

In other words, when we bear witness to Jesus Christ, the life of the world, in the struggle for justice and human dignity, we can and must struggle in politics and economics alongside the poor for the healing of social ills. And the most incisive weapon in this struggle is the proclamation of Christ's lordship over the demons and over the powers of death and injustice. What does this mean in concrete terms?

Every social system and economic order is threatened and endangered by sin and evil. As Christians, we believe that God has given human beings reason so that they may order and fashion their common life. But a system can sometimes become so totally perverted that we may speak of it as having fallen into the hands of the demons. Christians and churches must then unambiguously dissociate themselves from such a system by word and deed, either in specific instances or completely. Examples from history are the rejection of emperor worship by the early church; resistance to tyrants; Luther's conscientious rejection of the international financial and trading corporations of his day (what we would call "multinationals"); the struggle for the abolition of slavery in the nineteenth century; the Confessing Church's struggle against National Socialism in the 1930s.

More and more churches today are describing apartheid as a totally perverted system of this kind. In theological language, it is a demon-possessed system, and therefore something more than a social and political aberration.

The question posed at Vancouver was whether apartheid is not simply the tip of the iceberg. The industrialized nations, together with a few small elites in the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, exploit the majority of the world's population just as systematically as do the white South Africans with regard to the majority of the population. The demon of profit for the few at the expense of the impoverishment of the many has the whole world economic system firmly in its grip, with all the side-effects of discrimination and suppression of human rights. The 30 million or more deaths occurring from starvation each year as a direct result of the present world economic system require just as clear a confession from us as the death of 6 million Jews in Nazi Germany and the denial of the rights to 20 million people in South Africa.

But there is an even deeper issue, for the *demons* seek to rule not only in the world but also *in the church.* Whenever a complete perversion of

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[1] *Orthodox Thought*, ed. G. Tsetsis, Geneva, WCC, 1983, pp. 37f.

human power occurs in the world, the powers of darkness seek to infiltrate the church. Sometimes they even originate in the church. Then we are confronting the antichrist. The "German Christians", for example, sought to undergird the power of death embodied in National Socialism. White Reformed Christians have developed the concept of apartheid and divide the Lord's table between black and white along racist lines.

People can be found defending the present cut-throat world economic system in Christ's name. They talk of a "free economy", despite the fact that it defends the freedom only of the rich and powerful. They claim, moreover, that this freedom is the basis of religious liberty and of civil liberties, though it is precisely those liberties which are being destroyed in the dependent countries by the so-called "free economy". Central and South America, South Africa and many Asian countries furnish plenty of examples.

The Assembly thus bore clear witness, not only against the apartheid system and weapons of mass destruction, but also against the present cut-throat economic system and its pseudo-Christian justifications. We should now initiate in the churches a programme of education and decision-making and practical steps to combat this power of death. It is no longer merely a question of trade, but of our faith in God as Lord and of our life in Christ as we mediate that life to others.

What is *the common root* of apartheid, the cut-throat economy, weapons of mass destruction and the destruction of the earth? Sin is the desire to be like God (Gen. 3:5). In other words, human beings are using the power for life given by God to perform acts of wilful violence which lead to death. To those who stand in the Judeo-Christian tradition, the special power God has given to humankind is the faith that we have been made in the image of God and that the old and new people of God have been chosen to bring that image to completion. According to Gen. 1:26-28, the image of God means having dominion over the earth and subduing it. That frees humankind from fear of nature. Luther in his day still saw our human role as that of *cooperatores Dei*, co-workers with God in creation.

That attitude has undergone a change in modern times. As early as the sixteenth century Francis Bacon declared that *ipsa scientia potestas est*, knowledge itself is power. Classic expression was given to the new attitude by the philosopher Descartes: humankind is "maître et possesseur de la nature", *master and owner of nature.*

Because humankind is *master*, cooperation is reduced to operation pure and simple, to manipulation. The working tool for our power of operation is objectifying science and technology. Supposedly value-free, it in fact makes an idol of our dominion over nature. And because humankind is its *owner*, our stewardship is reduced to ownership. The accumulation of capital becomes a sign of election. Money becomes the second idol. The modern idols of dominion and money, based on science and technology, produce the following results:

- — unrestrained exploitation of nature (destruction of the earth);
- — exploitation of so-called primitive peoples, who, in the opinion of ethnocentric Europeans, are part of nature, matter and not spirit (coloni-

alism, racism — the Assembly was meeting in North America, where the original inhabitants have been all but wiped out!);
- — exploitation of manual labour by masters and owners (class domination);
- — discrimination against women, who are regarded as beings of nature and the senses (sexism);
- — use of military force by masters and owners to defend their domination and possessions.

If it is true that the deadly danger originates from our civilization in Europe and is based on a perversion of the biblical message, the struggle for justice and human dignity must begin with the household of God, the church. It is not simply a question of a better society, but a choice between Christ and antichrist, between church and antichurch.

In exorcizing the demons from its own household, the church of Jesus Christ will come into sharp conflict with society. It will be attacked and persecuted by the pseudo-church, not only in South Africa, where apartheid Christians persecute confessing Christians, but also in South and Central America where Christian groups, openly or clandestinely, connive at the murder of the poor and persecute the church of the poor. Similar activity may be observed in countries such as South Korea and the Philippines. Even groups advocating the build-up of weapons of mass destruction often do so in the name of the "Christian" West.

Sin is the perversion of the power given to all human beings. Heresy is the perversion of the power of the holy spirit given to Christians. We have, therefore, to learn not only to exorcize the demons but also to distinguish the spirits and to confess Christ faithfully, even at the risk of being persecuted by the pseudo-church.

This knowledge does not start by pointing the finger at others, sitting in judgment on them or even expelling them from the church by the exercise of power in some form or another. On the contrary, *a confessing church always begins by confessing its own sin.* In one way or another, all of us — unless we are among the absolutely poor — support the world economic system. Only when we are converted and are prepared to suffer, will God's commandment be acknowledged and obeyed. Today this means saying a clear "no" to systems of exploitation and mass destruction.

Depending on their traditions, different churches may choose different theological starting points. Lutherans have used the term "status confessionis" to express their opposition to Nazism and to apartheid, i.e. they have seen that here was a case where unambiguous confession was called for. The Reformed churches have labelled apartheid "heresy". Baptists expressed their covenant with God and with one another concretely in an "Abolitionist Covenant" for the abolition of slavery. An ecumenical group in the USA has adopted this approach in a "New Abolitionist Covenant" for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Other churches call a church which faithfully follows Christ a "prophetic church". The concept of the "church of the poor" also designates such an unambiguously committed church in a situation of systematic oppression and impoverishment. In Orthodoxy, the starting point would undoubtedly be the extension of the holy liturgy in order to achieve and maintain the church of Jesus Christ in its clarity and purity.

The powers of oppression and the power of liberation

These general theological statements are only truly meaningful if they can serve in the analysis, interpretation and perhaps even the change of the actual course of history. Issue Group 6 and the Assembly at various times sought to demonstrate that there is a connection between the various forms of racism and exploitation:

> Racism is often aggravated by international systems backed by powerful economic and military factors. Land rights claims of indigenous peoples are often rejected in the name of development and national security (report of Issue Group 6, para. 13.1).

It is also interesting to note that sexism (discrimination on sexual grounds) is also closely related to underlying economic factors:

> Behind many of the diverse manifestations of sexism are economic factors leading to exploitation and manipulation. Despite the considerable change in the traditional division of labour between men and women, women still have a long way to go in their struggle for equality. The growing phenomenon of sex tourism organized by international tourist agencies — affecting primarily but not exclusively women and girls in some third world countries — is an alarming development (*ibid.*, para. 14).

The report sums up the situation as follows:

> Underlying many manifestations of sexism and of racism is *class domination* based on economic exploitation and profit-motive, cultural captivity, colonialism and neo-colonialism (*ibid.*, para. 15).

It should be particularly emphasized that violation of human rights arising from different forms of abuse of power in East and West, North and South, was a central concern of the Assembly expressed in a carefully prepared statement. The statement will continue to have its place in the Council's future programmes. But it is also necessary to strengthen the work of the Council to combat the basic causes of injustice, which have their foundation in the East-West "culture of violence".

Empowering the powerless

It is of particular significance that delegates were prepared to look forward to a vision of what the church might be. The vision is in part already a reality, signs of it are to be found in basic communities, confessing groups and communities, and associations such as the "Broederking" in South Africa. Our task now is to draw all forms of the church, including its institutional forms, into the movement towards an unambiguous confession of Christ. The following proposal was accepted by the Assembly:

> *Covenanting*
>
> a) That the churches at all levels — congregations, dioceses/synods, networks of Christian groups and base communities — together with the WCC, enter into a covenant in a conciliar process:
>
> — to confess Christ, the life of the world, as the Lord over the idols of our times, the Good Shepherd who "brings life and life in its fullness" for his people and for all creation;

- to resist the demonic powers of death inherent in racism, sexism, class domination caste oppression, and militarism;
- to repudiate the misuse of economic organization, science and technology, in service of powers and principalities, and against people.

b) That we ourselves make a clear covenanting commitment to work for justice and peace as it was made here in Vancouver by Central American and US delegates as a sign of clear resistance to any kind of oppression and as a step forward towards peace with justice.

c) That we reject the heretical forces which use the name of Christ or "Christian" to legitimize the powers of death (*ibid.*, para. 25).

The covenant takes interchurch relationships seriously as a real bond between churches. Thus delegates from Central America and the USA entered into a covenant in the face of increasingly harsh oppression and persecution of Christians and churches in Latin America. Thereby, North American delegates have indicated that they are prepared to put their loyalty within the one body of Christ before their loyalty to their own government.

It was repeatedly emphasized that Christian networks are a part of this great conciliar movement. The realization of a proposal for a general council for life, peace and justice — made by the delegation from the German Democratic Republic — would bring us nearer to Dietrich Bonhoeffer's vision of a peace council. But first the vision must take root in our churches, in parishes, Christian groups, synods and assemblies. The church of God must become and be a sign of life, exposing the idols made by human hands for what they are and casting them down, as well as developing new alternatives, signs and symbols of life which create hope. Will we become a church resisting the powers of death and setting out on the road to new life? Jesus Christ, the life of the world, is already at work in many parts of the world, and among us, bringing such a church into being. The only question is whether we are prepared to be part of that church. Discipleship is costly.

The Struggle against the Beast

Aruna Gnanadason

Having listened to the voices of women during the Pre-Assembly Women's Meeting and during the Assembly, I feel compelled to say the following:

There is a need to constantly tell the stories of people's struggles for peace and justice. They carry the message of courage and hope that empowers us to change our world.

• Ms Gnanadason is on the staff of the Ecumenical Christian Centre, Bangalore, India.

The Chipko movement was organized by tribal women in the Uttarkhand region in North India, so as to protect their forests, their livelihood, their food, their life. When the contractors would come to fell their trees, each woman would cling to a tree as if in defiance of the contractor's saw, ready to give her life for the cause. Chipko, which means "to cling", was the key word for this claim of tribal women for life in all its fullness.

The struggle of these women was against the Beast which is in control of the world's resources, the land, the capital, human labour and even of people's minds.

We find the effects of the power of the Beast in various forms:

> It is there in the pain of a mother who has no food for her hungry children.
>
> It is there in the life of drudgery of rural women who have to walk long distances to collect just one bucket of water for the family for the day.
>
> It is there in the demand of indigenous peoples for their land.
>
> It is there in the overworking and underpaying of female workers in multinational industries.
>
> It is there in the degradation of women's bodies through prostitution tourism.
>
> It is there in the discrimination of people because of their colour or ethnic origin.
>
> It is there in the beating to death of a man because he is considered to be an outcast.
>
> It is there in the repression and torture of those who oppose governments which become more and more brutal in deference of the national security doctrine.
>
> It is there in the clamping down on the search for truth by controlling access to information.
>
> It is there in the preparation for conventional or nuclear war by ever-increasing production of weapons.
>
> It is there in the misuse of material and human resources for exploring more efficient forms of overkill.
>
> It is there in the raping of other people's environment and land by nuclear stockpiling, testing and waste dumping.
>
> It is there in the squeezing out of dependent economies by super-powers.
>
> It is there in the cultural manipulation of men and women through education, media, etc. to accept militaristic values so as to keep the war game going.
>
> The Beast has many faces.

As women inspired by the example of the tribal women of the Chipko movement, we respond with an action-oriented message that is directed to every Christian and to their churches and is of practical relevance for daily life in Christ. The Beast denies Christ as the life of the world and must be overcome.

The Beast can be defeated if we recognize the signs of hope in the life-giving forces all over the world. As instruments of militarization and repression are intensified, the people's will to resist and claim human dignity gains strength too. What is regarded as a threat by governments and other vested interests *is* the source of life in all its fullness. The church and Christians everywhere have to align with them.

Sisters and brothers, the world looks at us and expects something from us. Take firm and courageous stands. Let us commit ourselves to be a healing community in a broken world.

Learning in Community

Five Suggestions for Ecumenical Learning

Werner Simpfendörfer

1. Ecumenical learning is a process in which people discover that God in Christ has given us not a first, a second, or a third world, but *one* world. He has promised this *one* world a common future. To discover, unveil and put into practice this common future is the task of ecumenical learning. Such learning is a process of discovery. It involves the departure from my father's house, an exodus from my homeland, taking the risk of unexpected brotherhood and sisterhood. Such faith journeys of discovery cannot be prescribed by any authority, prefabricated in curricula or brought about through papers or documents. They have to come about in communities and groups which choose, define and determine themselves goals, methods, instrument, and speed of their common learning. The unforeseen, and even chaos are normal factors in this journey because the *one* world looks different from different angles. Ecumenical learning is also always linked with acts of transgression, because borders which normally exist and are respected by the so-called normal people are being crossed.

2. Ecumenical learning happens where we participate in the painful struggle of Christ for his *one* world. According to the letter to the Hebrews *he learned what he suffered*, and there is no other way for us to learn ecumenically than through participation in the struggle of people to become people. Ecumenical learning, therefore, cannot take place apart from that struggle, in academic ivory towers, in isolated suburban churches, in degree-oriented school systems or inward-looking retreat centres. It is first and foremost a call to follow the footsteps of the suffering Christ, involving ourselves in the struggle against those principalities and powers which distort lives, destroy creation and rob people of the fullness of life. For us in the West this means above all conversion from the misuse of power to sharing and solidarity within the *one* world. It means taking up the fight

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against the forces that are bent on dividing the *one* world into a first, second, and third world. It means to open ourselves to the challenge of changing our life-style, individually and corporately, an act which necessarily will bring us into conflict with the ruling powers who want us to be system-integrated consumers.

3. Ecumenical learning happens when we *link local experience with global concerns.* Local ecumenical experiences in community are needed before papers, documents and teaching can help us to understand and reflect. The risk of local ecumenical action has to be taken which relates my local conflict with global perspectives before relevant reflection can determine the further course. That is why I believe that the WCC must give up its heavy paper orientation in favour of a covenant with a human face. The primary task for the next years seem to me the development and deepening of the ecumenical team visits. This face-to-face, people-to-people, congregation-to-congregation encounter must not stop on the personal or analytical level, but must move into the common discovery of our common loyalty to Christ and what follows from that in the area of sharing and joint action. The basic educational effect of these encounters is that we begin to see the world and ourselves with the eyes of others and can constantly relate our prayers and our actions to the common commitment to Christ's *one* world.

4. Ecumenical learning requires *biblically inspired groups or communities for prophetic witness.* It is not an end in itself, but should lead to local witness with a global perspective. This requires groups and communities that are holistic in their composition and in their concerns. By their comprehensive composition they should be able to see connection and convergence of issues, e.g. between justice, peace and creation, or between hunger, affluence and the arms race. Moreover, such groups will have to learn to handle conflicts in a creative way and to take differences in outlook or practice seriously. This takes time and patience. Ecumenical learning is a process over the long haul. It involves staying together through conflicts, respecting minorities and trying to come to common decisions.

Whether or not such groups or communities are "the church" will be decided by the faithfulness of their prophetic witness and their capacity to read the signs of the times and to speak up accordingly. For me the peace movement in various countries and parts of the world is a living example of that type of prophetic community. Women's movements or ecological movements are of a similar quality.

5. Ecumenical learning requires *a worldwide network of centres designed to foster primary ecumenical experience.* In most parts of the world such centres exist already.

In order for these centres to function effectively three conditions must be met:

— there must be Christians of all ages, regardless of sex, belief and position, who are willing to take the risk and leap over the wall of narrowness and prejudice;

- there must be staff persons who are prepared and trained to allow ecumenical groups share their experiences, establish linkages, appreciate different concepts of the church, yet celebrating the *one* world;
- there must be churches and church leaders who are willing for their members to be involved in genuine ecumenical experiences, and who do not fear their critical outlook towards the institutional church.

May a thousand "Bossey Institutes" blossom for the long haul towards the *one* world in which peace and justice prevail as fruits of ecumenical learning!

An African Experience

Adeolu Adegbola

Ecumenical learning has been the experience of a group of Christians witnessing in West Africa to Jesus Christ, the life of the world. The group is related to the Centre for Applied Religion and Education, Ibadan.

Wider ecumenism

The group is ecumenical because the members confess different versions of the Christian faith. No less than ten denominations are represented. It is ecumenical also because of the theological pluralism represented by the participants. The diverse geographical origins of the participants is another factor which underlines the ecumenical nature of the group. And, of course, each member lives his or her own faith with people of various distinct socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. But there is still another factor.

In much of the world today, particularly in Asia and Africa, religious pluralism is the living reality of daily life. Living contacts and association with people of other faiths is the rule. Missionary experience in much of the past has regarded collaboration with people outside one's context of faith as apostasy. Non-fraternization has been encouraged as a rule.

However, it has been discovered that social realities call for a different mode of living. Poverty is part of our context. Mass hunger generally draws no distinction between Christians and Muslims or "pagans", nor does it distinguish between Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox or other confessors of the Christian faith. The solution to our socio-political problems lies not in answers stamped and labelled with our denominational names, but in practical but humble efforts dedicated to the name of Jesus the Saviour and offered in his spirit or universal love.

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So, although this is a point of tension between our group and some other levels of churches, we are determined to open our arms wide to embrace people of need whatever their religious confession, and we welcome one another as participants in the struggle for fuller life. The whole human community in each given situation becomes the arena for our struggle and witness, the open and spacious classroom for our daily learnings.

Learning in community

Learning in community includes for us, first, using the experiences of people in the community as a source for generating knowledge, especially such knowledge which, when applied, can add to the quality of life. This method of deriving knowledge from community experience has been used a great deal by researchers, opinion pollsters, journalists and others, though they have not generally acknowledged it as much as they need to have done. Attention is being now called to it, with the need to develop it more intentionally as a valid source of knowledge and a valid classroom for learning. Only when it is deliberately acknowledged can the necessary learning skills be discovered and developed to enable us to make the most of it.

Secondly, to regard community as a context for learning raises the whole question as to the nature of the kind of society we live in. A society which abuses children and treats them as things, which discriminates against women either in social clubs, in working places, or in the political process; a society which barricades refugees or prisoners behind barbed wires like animals, or a religious system whose primary function is to mesmerize people into passive submission — all these have negative educational value. Political, economic and religious systems must now be critically viewed as to whether the values they sustain are for life or for death.

Thirdly, events in society become part of the source materials for our learning. But events do not just happen. They are enacted by human beings, either with or without previous planning. Even unplanned events have their own lessons to teach. Yet, events take on more educational value when they are planned and are well arranged.

Fourthly, when events of public value are planned by single individuals or by small groups having vested interests, the events more often serve only the interests of those who plan them. In many such cases, the real agenda is generally hidden and becomes clear to the participants only as time goes on. The history of colonialism, of commerce and of religion, to name only a few, is replete with demagogy, manipulation and exploitation. The more the people participate and are generally involved in events which concern them, the better it is for promoting life.

Fifthly, a large majority of people easily succumb to the soporific effect of their miseducation. Oppressed or manipulated people do create for themselves a cosy "culture of silence" and passivity. Even the political ideal of democracy with its practical processes has not been sufficient to wake up people to participate actively in enacting liberating events which would determine development. Hence, the need for a constant programme of "conscientization" in the double sense of waking up consciousness and arousing the conscience.

Our understanding of ecumenical learning has led us to initiate two separate but related programmes, namely a people's or popular process of awareness building, and the promotion of an association of "Christians for a New Society" in which educated but alienated Christians are challenged to participate in a new "missionary" undertaking.

Sixthly, efforts to wake up people from social stupor may bring about conflict; conflict with the forces of oppression, and conflict from within the oppressed group itself. But such conflicts themselves can and ought to be made to become an educational opportunity. New learning skills are needed in this respect.

We can thank God that there are more and more identifiable and articulate prophetic souls today, individuals and groups, willing to live for change and to facilitate it. They are found among women and youth, the poor and impoverished, the exploited and oppressed, ethnic minorities and workers, men and women in rural and urban areas, who protest the kind of societies they are made to live in and are therefore resisting the kind of life-crippling learning which has been forced on themselves or others. This becomes a challenge to the traditional youth work, women's work, urban-industrial ministries which go on in our churches. We find that social action which deliberately seeks to change deathly systems becomes very much an invigorating educational enterprise for all. Learning is therefore more clearly seen as a "political" action. Or conversely, not only formal education but also politics are to be seen as processes of establishing or reinforcing a system of values of a prescribed community. While some educational and political systems are more life-giving than others, there are those which are plainly death-inducing. This is a situation which calls for a very sensitive and critical awareness in the church, an implication not easily seen.

Challenge to the churches

The lessons we have learnt appear to be simple, elementary and ordinary. Yet they have great implications for the churches in Africa. Here are some of them:

a) The theme "Jesus Christ — the Life of the World" should challenge us to reconsider what should be the "mission" of the church in the world today. The commission to "go into all the world and make disciples of all the nations" may mean more than has possibly been realized or generally practised. If more than religious and sectarian proselytization is meant, it could mean positively changing values, recruiting agents of social change, providing small alternatives in the present that could anticipate and give flesh to long-range hopes for the future.

b) Christianity in Africa has been felt to be growing fast, faster than was predicted at the beginning of the last decade. But sociologists have alerted us that what is growing is a church life that is better described as "religion of the oppressed". The questions which are better asked begin with: What are the forces of oppression in our societies to which this church growth seems to be a response? Why are our poor poor? And in the light of these, in what other ways can fuller life be mediated in the name of him who is the life of the world? In other words, the churches in Africa must learn how to do more than pray when there is a political crisis or threats of such. Churches need to learn how to dig beneath surface realities, to do more than offer solace to the afflicted.

c) Socio-economic questions deserve more attention by the churches. New types of projects need to be looked for, smaller projects having the potential of improving the quality of life of the common people, capable of being appropriated by the people. This calls for a new missionary understanding of economics, technology and allied disciplines. Church authorities, preachers and teachers of the church need to learn how to evoke this new missionary understanding.

d) Our sensitivity to collaboration with people of other faiths might be re-examined. Where dialogue has been opened, it needs to go beyond theological debate to an exploration of how, in an increasingly secular age, the resources of faith and religion can be used for fuller life for the people.

e) New methods of Bible study have to be looked for, lively enough as to be able to mediate new life, giving more room for the reflection of the people, proceeding both from the Bible to the modern world and from the concerns of contemporary society to the light and life of the word of God in the Bible and in Jesus the Christ.

f) A different approach to leadership development is called for, providing for both ordained and lay, both male and female and of all ages, both formal and non-formal, both institutional and by extension; less individualistic and more communalistic. The contents on all levels have to be for "development" and pro-life, and the methods more participatory.

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Educational institutions of the church, from Sunday schools to theological colleges, face a challenge in this regard. Where older institutions are open to the Spirit, flexible and innovative enough, needed adjustments may be made, so that such wise institutions could bring out of their treasures things both new and old. Otherwise, new types of institutions which are more responsive to the winds of the Spirit may have to be founded. Network-building between such institutions within each country, each continent and across the world will further the need to relate local experiences to global realities. Within these networks, exchange of information and of personnel across national and denominational boundaries will further our ecumenical learning.

Communication for Peace and Justice

Michael Traber

Whatever we are as developed human beings we owe to the community of people with whom we have lived, particularly those who raised and taught us in the early years of our lives. If we had been totally isolated from others we could not speak, or think, or respond in any human way. We learned these things in the process of communicating with others.

The human being that has been created in God's image is the "being that speaks" (Aristotle). We are only truly human if we can communicate with each other verbally and non-verbally. Likewise, community only exists by and through communication. Communication is thus a basic individual and social necessity, and a universal human right.

Communication is so basic and so universal that it has been called a precondition for all other human rights. Without communication there cannot be any integrity of life, no life in fullness, no community, no worship, no human dignity.

The opposite of communication is not silence but sin. Sin, in its ultimate meaning, is the breaking of relationship between a human being and God, and between each other. Sin is the refusal to communicate and to be in communion. Sin therefore means isolation, division, and barriers that prevent, or at least inhibit, disturb and distort communication. The Bible calls the epitomy of all evil the "liar". The devil makes communication impossible. All meaning of life is thus lost.

Human dignity, equality, freedom and justice

Genuine communication presupposes *respect for human dignity.* We cannot communicate with people whom we regard as "inferior", whose basic worth as humans we do not recognize. We can impart information to them, but cannot communicate with them. We can also sell them "media products" as we sell other commodities. But the selling or offering of media products may be prompted mainly by business concerns, by the wish to dominate, influence, or perhaps even manipulate people. Many mass media show little respect for human dignity.

If genuine communication presupposes the recognition that all human beings have an infinite worth just because they are humans, this also

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implies the notion of *equality*. The more explicit equality there is in human interaction, the easier communication becomes. I cannot really communicate with persons, whether child or adult, male or female, black, brown or white, if I look down on them. Prejudice is an almost insurmountable communication barrier.

Another presupposition of communication is *freedom*. Only people who are free can communicate. The oppressors cannot speak with the oppressed and vice versa. Masters cannot communicate with their slaves. The deprivation of freedom makes genuine communication impossible. The first symptom of oppression is, usually, the curtailing of freedom of communication. This can be done by government action or by some kind of pressure of society. The dictates of modern nation states and the demands of secular ideologies have created the phenomenon of "the unutterable". Certain things simply cannot be said if they go against societal dictates. The absence of almost any critical public voice in the *early* years of the US government's involvement in Vietnam is a good example of how the "untolerable" became "the unutterable", and thus an implicit restriction of free communication.

A great deal has been said in the West about the freedom of the press, freedom of broadcasting, etc. No doubt, these are important values. Conceptually, however, freedom of communication has been lifted out of its wider meaning. Such freedom is intrinsically bound up with the aim of all communication — community and the fulfilment of basic human needs. Only in this context is freedom of communication an absolute.

There is, above all, the justice issue of communication itself. To deprive an individual or a group of people of the possibility to communicate freely with each other is the most unjust thing anybody can do. It is a deprivation of all that a human being stands for. The poor, the marginalized, the refugees, and in many countries the women and the old, are the non-people with whom communication is extremely limited. They are the "silent people" who have no right to speak — at least not publicly.

Western/Northern domination

Justice in communication has also become an international issue. UNESCO appointed an international commission for the study of communication problems, which gave their report, *Many Voices One World* (popularly known as the MacBride Report), the sub-title: "Towards a more just and more efficient world information and communication order". The implication is that our present order of international communication lacks justice.

Seen broadly, the present global information and communication system "is basically a reflection of the world's dominant political and economic structures, which tend to maintain or reinforce the dependence of poorer countries on the richer"[1]. This "intimately affects the psychological and social framework within which men and women lead their lives", and the effects of it are most marked in the so-called developing countries.

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[1] *Many Voices One World*, Paris, Unesco 1980, p. 148.

The countries of the West have a near monopoly in the international dissemination of information: the world receives some 80 per cent of its news through London, Paris and New York. Readers and listeners in most third world countries are thus conditioned to see the events of the world, including their own countries, mainly through Western eyes. But the North's domination of the South's communication also includes music and film, book production and entertainment, magazines and comic strips. Most of these media reflect the values of consumer societies for which the acquisition of material goods, especially luxury goods, is almost an end in itself. Daily exposure to these values has had a profound counter-developmental effect in the South. Implicitly they give a vision which is false and raise aspirations which cannot be met.

The standards of the West's worldwide information and communication system have largely been taken over by newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations operating in the South itself. There, indigenous urban elites, trained and sponsored by the West, have localized media systems which deprive the people of participation and represent values which are not their own.

The main instrument of the North's domination of communication are the transnational communication corporations. The principal objective of transnational corporations is the maximization of profit. Moral and cultural values are subordinated to the demands of profit. Transnational corporations are also responsible for the manufacture of most of the technical equipment used for mass communication, particularly in the electronic media. Therefore, they implicitly control the direction in which communication technologies develop and thus the way in which they will have to be used, namely in a "one-way flow", with communication remaining a commodity to be sold.

The intrusion of computer and micro-electronic technologies, linked through satellites, into the global information system is likely to make the world's imbalance in information almost irreversible. Thus instead of extending the decolonization process into the world of communication, there is a danger of a still tighter stranglehold by the West on the cultures and consciousness of the South. The new order of information and communication which UNESCO has proposed must be seen against this background. It is a logical consequence of the process of political decolonization which, at long last, should enable the countries of the South to develop their own resources, express their own values, and control their own destinies. The problem, the MacBride Report says, is "so basic that solutions to it cannot be delayed" (p. 149).

War and peace in communication

Another question of equal urgency is the issue of *peace*, which for better or worse has a great deal to do with communication. Those who have analyzed the content and language of the mass media have come to the conclusion that they literally thrive on violence and war, in accordance with the old journalistic criterion that "conflict creates news". The reporting of wars, of acts of violence and all kinds of conflict (including the playful conflicts we call sporting events), receive priority treatment by the media. And if there is no war to report on, theatres of war and acts of violence are created by the media and entertainment industries. Witness the recent series of films called "Star Wars", or the newest craze for video games. It would not be so bad if this was the exception. But it is almost the rule. A large part of the entertainment offered by television, video, and films consists of acts of violence and theatres of war.

This has greatly influenced even the language of mass media. It has become belligerent in character even when not engaged in war reporting. The classic example is sports reporting with its explicit use of the terminology of conventional warfare. Another example is politics. Politicians are "defeated", parties "strike" intending to "liquidate" and "annihilate", they drop verbal "bombs", etc.

One of the most cherished traditions in the history of the press is that it is a servant of truth. Yet when the British media did their post-mortem on the Falklands/Malvinas reporting, they were unanimous in their conclusion that the first casualty of war was truth. Government used them, quite purposefully, to deceive "the enemy", the public at home and the world at large. So it has always been.

Almost every war between nations has started with a series of lies — about the potential enemy, about the other's intentions and, of course, about the other's preparations for war. This is the problem of what has become known as "cold war". Led by the politicians, the media build up other nations as "enemies" and their ideologies as "evil". The nuclear climate of this world can no longer afford this.

If war is the ultimate failure of public communication, peace is its ultimate aim. People who are at war with each other can no longer talk to each other. Acts of violence or war mean the total breakdown of communication. The word has been replaced by the gun or the knife.

Peace, on the other hand, means people in communication. Peaceful coexistence of peoples and nations of different national, racial or cultural identities, and of different ideological persuasions, can in today's world only be achieved through communication. The communication we speak of is, of course, a great deal more than an "industry" or a business or an instrument for national integration in the hands of governments or powerful elites. Neither does it pretend to be neutral and "objective", merely telling what is happening in the world. No communication, least of all public communication, is strictly neutral or objective, nor does it merely report things that have happened. All such communication is implicitly biased, usually in favour of what is called "national interests" or the predominant ideology. Yet, to quote once again the MacBride Report, "above all national and political interests there is the supreme interest of all humanity in peace" (p. 179).

The supreme interest in peace is also the supreme interest of God's reign. *Shalom*, that simple yet complex word which encapsulates what Jesus meant with the coming of God's reign, gives all the pre-conditions for peace: reconciliation, harmony, mutual respect, humanness, joy, brotherhood and sisterhood, community. All this is only possible through communication. And all communication fostering these values is communication for peace.

The agenda on communication seems overwhelming, partly because we see communication as the very nerve centre of society. Likewise, communication must be seen as the nerve centre of the church, or rather, communication is the heart of the church. In its deepest dimension it is nothing less than love — love in practice.

Love is self-giving. And so is genuine communication. It means giving something from within, breaking out of one's sheltered self in order to share and allow others to share, thus establishing communion and community.

Implications

What then does this mean in practice? What are the consequences of our reflections? I would like to sum it up in six brief points.

1. The first point is obvious. If the main function of communication is socialization or the integration of individuals in community, we ought to *give communication much more attention* than we have done hitherto. In practice this means more investment in personnel, more attention to the fostering of creative talents, more allocation of money, and, above all, more reflection on, and research in, the whole phenomenon of communication, both public and private, interpersonal and mass-mediated. It is difficult to understand why communication has occupied such a low priority in the churches for so long. And the place to start might well be an integrated curriculum of communication studies in our seminaries and theological faculties.

2. Much of what we call Christian communication is "message"-oriented rather than people-oriented. We have fragmented the human being into a Christian "top" and a secular "bottom". We have assumed that Christians are mainly readers, and if not readers then silent listeners. All this is contrary to the way God created us. Taking people seriously, respecting their *human dignity* and integrity would mean to do away with our separations and fragmentations and use forms of communication other than merely the cognitive linear print or the one-directional speech. Respect for human dignity implies the use of pictures, symbols and songs, a new approach to festivals and feasts and all such means that bring people together as a community, both Christian and secular. The reclaiming of what is sometimes called popular culture is more urgent and more important at a time when our communication environment is increasingly dominated by the mass media.

3. *Equality and egality:* That is an area where churches have special problems. Partly because of the power consciousness and vanity of some of our leaders, who sometimes create the impression they *are* the church; partly because of the old journalistic criterion that "prominence makes news". It is all a question of whom we make prominent. The common man and woman are the truly prominent people from the perspective of the gospel: the child who overcomes a handicap; the nurse for whom service to the sick was more important than getting married; the farmer who glorifies

God by his responsible care for soil, water, trees and animals. Such people are as prominent for Christian communicators as the bishop or the leading Christian lawyer.

4. *Freedom:* The right to communicate, we have said, is a pre-condition for all other human rights, and the first sign of repression is usually the curtailing of freedom of speech. This does not only apply to governments but to all societies anywhere, all communities, all churches. When we speak of freedom of speech, whose freedom and whose speech do we really mean? The editor's, the producer's, the church leader's, the editorial board's? What access, what right and what freedom to communicate publicly do others have? As long as our communication ventures remain hierarchically structured, they are likely to remain non-participatory and undemocratic, restricting or rendering impossible the people's right to communicate. Our issue paper develops a theological model for the dialogical understanding of communication, namely the "covenant relationship". It deserves further reflection. This model goes far beyond a participatory and free press. Any form of oppression, all deprivations of freedom are contradictory to genuine communication and the ideal of a universal communicative society.

5. The Christian's commitment to *justice* is beyond debate, because Christ's bias for the poor, the downtrodden and the oppressed is too obvious. What we can and must debate, however, is how this commitment becomes part of our communication. We like to compare ourselves with the prophets of old. But prophecy means more than reporting a speech or sermon criticizing the authorities. Prophecy is symbolic action, both in words and praxis. In practical terms, prophecy may well mean the systematic endeavour to champion the cause of the silent people, the non-people, regardless of whether they are Christians or not. They should have the first right to speak through our media. And more than that: the churches should play a facilitating role that the marginalized and oppressed can assume communication power of their own and by themselves. One must be grateful to the churches in Latin America, who have developed the concept of "comunicación popular", for showing us the way in this respect.

But there is a wider issue of justice: justice in communication structures on the international level. The present order, or disorder, in global communication has been analyzed succinctly by the MacBride Commission and the staff of UNESCO. They have also made proposals how these unjust structures can be changed. One can only salute UNESCO and its staff for providing a truly prophetic voice in the most basic of all justice concerns — communication. This issue has now an urgency of its own because the gap between the information rich and the information poor is likely to widen still more and become irreversible through the development of modern communication technologies. We are now witnessing the rise of a new confraternity of super-elites, spread across the globe, linked together by instant satellite communication, computer hook-ups and infinite data retrieval systems, all controlled by a few metropolitan powers and transnational companies. If this is not an issue of international and national justice, I do not know what justice is. Working with, and supporting Unesco may be our best practical option in this field.

6. Finally, *peace.* Are we willing to change our media language? Are we prepared to give up our stereotypes of other nations, cultures, races, ideologies, religions and churches? Are we prepared to go against the so-called national interests in times of crisis and disputes for the sake and the benefit of "the supreme interest of all humanity in peace"? Are we ready for debates, for hard mental arguments? Or are we so self-righteous that we cannot tolerate pluralism of opinions? Public communication, alas, is irreversible. What has been said cannot, really, be made unsaid. The prejudices and stereotypes contained in public communication remain our counter-witness of the gospel.

On an equally practical level we have to ask ourselves if the churches as public communicators can avoid their responsibilities in a nuclear age by not actively supporting those who have taken up the Christian cause — whether they are Christians or not — of advocating nuclear disarmament. How can Christian communicators, if they are truly Christian and truly communicators, be silent about the arms race in any part of the globe and, in particular, the nuclear issue between the two super-powers and their respective allies? War, and the threat of and preparations for war are, indeed, the ultimate failure of public communication.

The Church, the Churches and the Metropolitan Church

Jeffrey Gros

In recent years the nature of the unity we seek through the conciliar expression of the ecumenical movement has again been brought under scrutiny. In the World Council, the admission of a multiplicity of churches, some without water baptism, has caused Orthodox members of the Council to question whether progress in conciliar and sacramental theology is being taken seriously. The very proliferation of Protestant communions in the Council causes dismay in some quarters.

In 1950 the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA emerged out of the 1908 Federal Council as a "cooperative agency" presuming that theology divides and service unities. The Faith and Order Commission was added to the cluster of agencies after the Oberlin conference in 1957. While there has been a desire for the Commission to be involved in the mainstream of the church-uniting work of consensus and dialogue, more recently the work of bilateral conversations and contextualization, there has also been the persistent desire that the Commission provide a theological resource for other units of the Council and the Governing Board, providing theological undergirding for advocacy positions. There has been a certain tension between the urgency of response to national issues, which has been the gift of the NCCCUSA, and the slow and painstaking theological work required to provide a theological consensus on issues of Christian faith and ethics.

At the present time the NCCCUSA has a Panel on Future Mission and Purpose in place, appointed by its president, Bishop James Armstrong. This panel has been raising the question, among others, of the role of theology in the witness and life of the Council. There are many who would like to see the Christian faith brought to bear more consciously on both questions of Christian unity and on the ethical pronouncements of the Council. As a result of this concern, the future role of Faith and Order is very much before the minds of those reflecting on the Council's future.

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Even in the foundation of the World Council, as it clarified its position relative to ecclesiology of member communions, it was the US ecumenists under the leadership of Henry P. Van Dusen who attempted to press the American understanding of church and Christian unity on the rest of the churches.[1] The World Council has moved beyond the absolute ecclesiological neutrality of the Toronto Statement (1950) in New Delhi and with the Conciliar Fellowship hopes of Uppsala and Nairobi. In 1981 the NCCCUSA moved closer to an ecclesial self-understanding with its constitutional change speaking of itself as

> a community of Christian communions which, in response to the Gospel as revealed in the Scriptures, confess Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God as Saviour and Lord. These communions covenant with one another to manifest ever more fully the unity of the Church.

The recent application of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC) for membership in the NCCCUSA has hovewer surfaced the lengths the Council has to go before it learns how to provide a context of both style and constitution in which its members can learn to deal with each other as community. The Fellowship was founded in 1968 in Los Angeles to minister to those who had been alienated from their own churches because of their sexual orientation. Since then the fellowship has grown and has 176 congregations, a seminary and a multiplicity of ministries. It now includes Christians of all sexual orientations.

It takes little reflection to see why the application raises fundamental difficulties. Regardless of the theological rationale offered, acceptance of the UFMCC would automatically be interpreted in the secular media and by many or most Christians as a formal legitimation of homosexuality as an acceptable Christian way of life. But rejection is problematic as well for an ecumenical body that includes churches holding strongly contrasting views on the nature of the church, of baptism, holy orders and the eucharist, and on such issues as abortion, divorce, the role of women in the life of the church, and many other questions. Thus, rejection of the UFMCC could and would be seen by some (and not by homosexuals alone) as an expression of sexual prejudice — again, without regard for the reasons offered.

The membership process

In considering an application for membership, the NCCCUSA follows four steps: (1) the Constituent Membership Committee examines technical qualifications (numbers, legal status, theological basis of the communion) and makes a recommendation; (2) the Governing Board of the NCCCUSA votes on eligibility; (3) the 32 member communions vote on membership six months after the eligibility vote; (4) the full Governing Board votes finally on admittance to full membership.

This elaborate process reflects the serious concerns raised within the NCCCUSA by questions of eligibility and membership. Those churches that joined the NCCCUSA in order to restore the unity of the body of Christ in faith and sacrament regard any legitimation of a newly formed church as a further splintering of that body. The new Preamble and Purpose has proposed a shift from an associational to an evangelical conception seeking to put the unity of the church, both in faith and in action, at the centre of the NCCCUSA's self-understanding. It is ironic then that the first issue threatening this fragile unity is the potential addition of a new member. But it is precisely the ecumenical implications of the new "Preamble and Purpose" that are being tested in the discussion of the UFMCC application.

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[1] W. A. Visser 't Hooft, *Memoirs*, The Westminster Press, 1973, p. 218.

At the Governing Board meeting in Nashville in May 1982, the Constituent Membership Committee completed the first step of the application process. It found that the UFMCC met the technical qualifications for membership. Delegates brought a wide array of concerns to the debate. Some, seeing the UFMCC as a symbol of the excluded, suffering, gay and lesbian community, felt ready to vote eligibility. Many were not yet prepared to take this step. Others seemed prepared to resign from the NCCCUSA if a political "rush to judgment" were to exclude their voices from the discussion. A great deal of unecumenical talk about "blackmail", "walking out", "being held hostage", and "homophobia" was heard. Some seemed to hope that this issue might pare down NCCCUSA membership to a more manageable number of churches with a more predictable outlook. At the same time others, having been excluded, would have been able to walk away in good conscience, following a course pressed on them by their membership for decades. Neither of these responses resonates with the new understanding of the NCCCUSA as a community of communions. But then, how can community be built when members meet only in parliamentary debate with no theological or ecumenical orientation by either the Council or the communions they represent?

While the organizing occasion of the UFMCC was not a consideration in the report and deliberations of the membership committee, a segment of the application letter read at the Governing Board meeting seemed proof to many that, in fact, sexuality was at the centre of the discussion. In this view, the NCCCUSA's final decision would be judged, not by criteria set forth in its own constitution, but by the sexuality question. The media, the public, and perhaps their own church members would have little patience for the complex questions of ecclosiology and ecumenism that membership applications raise, and the vote would be seen as either pro- or anti-homosexuality.

Theological questions

The fundamental questions raised by this application seem to be: Is it possible for the NCCCUSA to remain an effective vehicle for restoring the sacramental fellowship in the apostolic faith if this community is admitted? Or, on the other hand, can the Council call itself an inclusive Christian community witnessing to the evangelical openness of Jesus Christ if this community is excluded?

In the US the not inconsiderable openly gay and lesbian community is largely secularized and hostile to institutional religion. The discussions in the secular press, the persecution of the homosexual community by some sectors of the religious community and the progressive institutionalization of the homosexual community in the US makes the issues inescapable for the churches. Many of the churches have their own gay and lesbian caucuses and support groups that provide a dimension of ministry and institutionalization within their respective communions.

The last decade has seen much internal conflict and tension among the major Protestant members of the Council as they have tried to face ways of assimilating new psychological, biblical and social insights into their discussion of sexuality, ordination and ministry. Both churches and theologians have spent considerable efforts providing enlightened bases for discussing the issues involved.[2] The Faith and Order Commission has issued its own "Call to Responsible Ecumenical Debate on Controversial Issues: Abortion and Homosexuality".[3]

Sacrament-oriented churches of the Lutheran and Orthodox traditions with an emphasis on confession, spiritual direction and other personal ways of dealing with human diversity, and the affirmation of the centrality of theological and sacramental unity, find it difficult to understand how something so personal as one's sexual life can cause division in the sacramental fellowship or be raised to the level of celebration implied in holy union or ordination. The report of the first dialogue quotes an Orthodox participant as saying:

> Pastoral ministry to homosexual persons in our particular culture is very difficult, and the complexities do not allow for a simple formulation. The very nature of pastoral ministry is personal and contextual, and decisions are made with pastoral *ekonomia* on the basis that it is the heterosexual monogamous marriage that is normative.
>
> It is too simple to say that the only possible pastoral judgment is to tell homosexual persons to repent or get out of the church. Often this is neither necessary nor possible.
>
> Nor on the other hand, can ministry be simply defined as affirming, celebrating, and even sacramentally consecrating homosexuality as a blessing from God, for all Christians to recognize.
>
> The homosexual Christian, struggling with his or her homosexuality, who to death continues to be involved in acts with some sense of pathos before God, may be closer to God than the self-righteous straight person who says, "To hell with all of them."
>
> The drama of the human soul, the life before God, the complexities of the matter, do not allow us to conclude either that the authentic pastoral ministry is simply to exclude all active homosexuals from the community of the church, or that a church can understand its ministry as simply affirming and celebrating homosexuality.[4]

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[2] Edward Batchelor, Jr., editor, *Homosexuality and Ethics*, The Pilgrim Press, 1980; James B. Nelson, *Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology*, Augsburg, 1978; Anthony Kosnik, editor, *Human Sexuality*, New Directions in American Catholic Thought, Paulist Press, 1977.

[3] *Ecumenical Trends*, Vol. 8, No. 3, March 1979, p. 45.

[4] "Report to the Governing Board of the National Council of Churches of Christ from the Commission on Faith and Order on the application for membership of The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches", *Midstream*, July/October 1983, Vol. 22, Nos. 3 and 4, pp. 456-467, paragraph 25; ("An Experiment in Understanding", a reprint of this article is available from the Commission on Faith and Order, NCCCUSA, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115-0050 for $2.00).

Other churches, especially those in the Reformed and Methodist traditions, see the need of a more one-to-one correspondence between personal behaviour and church fellowship and therefore see the need for proclaiming the acceptability of a new anthropology and ecclesial legitimation of this understanding — or its rejection as incompatible with the Christian life — in their life together in church. One Presbyterian participant put it this way:

> I consider that the issue at hand is simultaneously an issue of theological integrity and one of justice. One way to decipher the "stakes" of the present debate is to clarify what is the *operative* organizing principle of the NCC. *Is* membership in the NCC determined by confession of faith in Jesus Christ and the affirmation of the Gospel, or is there another principle at work which is more determinative? A principle of *exclusion* necessarily suggests what is most important theologically, ethically, and politically, and to retain sexual orientation as a principle of exclusion would indicate that sexuality takes precedence over Christian faith as the decisive factor in shaping the life and work of the NCC.[5]

The faith and order study

To reconcile these divisions, the Governing Board voted to allow time for dialogue on the ecumenical and ecclesiological issues. In the course of debate the allotted time was restricted to one calendar year. The representatives of the NCCCUSA member communions were to meet for serious theological reflection. The UFMCC was also to be involved in dialogue. In addition NCCCUSA member churches were encouraged to raise these issues pastorally within their own communions.

The Faith and Order Commission, delegated to oversee this process, was not asked to make recommendations as to eligibility or membership. In October 1982, the Commission unanimously approved a process to gather relevant information, to organize a dialogue first among NCCCUSA member communions and second between representatives of the UFMCC and these communions, and finally to discuss in the full commission a final report to be presented to the Governing Board at its meeting in San Francisco, 10-13 May 1983.

The two dialogues were central to the Commission's process of study and discussion. Twenty persons representing 27 of the 32 NCCCUSA member churches met in November 1982 for the first dialogue. Their theological differences and agreements were explored. They confessed that their churches were weak in ministry to homosexuals and that this weakness was a factor in the formation of the UFMCC. There was also grave concern about the impact on the homosexual community of a negative vote on eligibility or membership. On the other hand, an affirmative vote could well be taken as a means of relieving the churches of their own internal problem of how to deal with homosexuals within their congregations.

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[5] Marvin M. Ellison, "The United Presbyterian Church in the USA and Ecumenical Relationships", *Documentation* from member communions of the National Council of Churches prepared for dialogue between representatives of those communions and The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, Commission on Faith and Order, 1982, 1983; p. 195 (available for $15.00 — see address note 4).

The second dialogue in December brought together seven representatives of the NCCCUSA and six for the UFMCC. Agreement here was much less marked. While dialogue was opened and could continue, it became clear to the participants that the issue is one that has serious potential both for uniting and dividing the churches. The issue raised by the UFMCC application, both parties understand, is not put forward to be dealt with merely technically in terms of constitutional requirements of the NCCCUSA. The substantive issues raised by the UFMCC are at the centre of its faith understanding of the gospel. In brief form that understanding is:

> The UFMCC affirms that love is good, that it is from God and that it is blessed, since God is love and loves everyone. The UFMCC also affirms that one of God's created possibilities for loving includes physical, sexual loving between people of the same gender. The UFMCC grounds this affirmation in what it takes to be the undeniable facts of human experience and observations drawn from the social sciences, and considers their affirmation as compatible with the biblical message. The churches of the NCCCUSA must take this testimony of the UFMCC most seriously, since in the past some communions have come to accept positions which their founders had originally denied.[6]

In addition to this agreement on the anthropological issue that divides the churches, a list of other theological concerns that are apt subjects for dialogue was suggested in the report. The abbreviated list of issues included: the centrality or non-centrality of homosexuality in the application; the limits of legitimate diversity in the Council; the differences between eligibility and membership in the Council; the effects of the vote on inclusiveness in the Council, on the understanding of "ecumenical" in the life of the Council; the effects of the vote on the UFMCC, on homosexual people, on violence in American society; biblical interpretation and education; authority in the tradition; the question of normativity; the relation of teaching and practice in sexuality, and ministry to and from the marginal in the Christian community.

If the NCCCUSA is not a vehicle for restoring the integrity of the apostolic faith in a full sacramental fellowship, then it is meaningless to churches like the Orthodox and Lutheran. Unity in mission requires building unity in the divided faith. The weakness of the NCCCUSA for some is its inability to understand the faith life of its own member communions. The Faith and Order study has been an opportunity for those churches willing to do so to sort through the difference of emphasis. In addition, questions about the styles of relationship among member churches and methods of communicating NCCCUSA agendas to church members have been raised and explored.

The leaders of the UFMCC have been clear in putting their church forward as a Christian church and not as a group defined uniquely by its stand on issues of sexuality. Nonetheless, questions of sexuality have not been absent from the discussions, and there are some who see the UFMCC application as the means of advancing a "class action suit" and making the vote on UFMCC membership a referendum on sexuality.

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[6] *Midstream, op. cit.*, paragraph 31.

The prophetic role of the church in working for justice in its own domain and in the secular community as integral to the Gospel of Jesus Christ was acknowledged by all the member communions. And the members of this discussion were explicit in affirming the churches' role in advocating justice for all, no matter what their sexual orientation. Issues of human sexuality and justice were acknowledged to be integral to all discussions of church life, and, for some communions, that will be the central issue in this vote on membership. For other communions, however, participation in a "community of communions" is not synonymous with human rights advocacy, pastoral care, or even dialogue. For these churches the unity of the church and the integrity of the Gospel will be at stake in the vote. The mandate of the Faith and Order Commission was to focus and report on these issues of ecclesiology and ecumenical fellowship.

The dialogue

This year-long process of study, discussion and writing has been criticized all around. Some saw the biblical, historical or theological reflections on the issues raised by the UFMCC application as a smoke screen behind which the churches hide from the "real" issues in American culture. Others argued that the study, by using the churches' designated theologians, was not sufficiently sensitive to feminist concerns. There are those, including seasoned Faith and Order leadership, who see this question as essentially a feminist concern. (Five of the twenty theologians appointed to the first dialogue were women; in the second, three of the seven NCCCUSA representatives were women.) Still others felt that the lack of theological depth and seriousness of some participants made it impossible to clarify the issues. And finally, there were those who took exception to the fact that the member communions met in discussion among themselves before their dialogue with the UFMCC. The report to the Governing Board was criticized as being "unbalanced" in that it allowed for voices both opposed to and affirmative of the application, while other reports provided only affirmative voices.

The NCCCUSA's new "Preamble and Purpose" calls for more serious attention to unity in the Christian faith — a call that itself brings a divided response from its members. There are member communions committed to the social concerns agenda of the NCCCUSA — building "peace with justice" — that see a theological affirmation of unity as supporting that agenda. For these members, unity in the Christian faith is both an inescapable demand of scripture and a recognition that a divided witness cannot speak of peace.

In looking at the ecclesiologies of NCCCUSA members, it is important to recognize that the churches, in differing, are being true to their own understandings of the Gospel and its embodiment in Christ's risen body — the church, as they see it. Among the 32 member churches, two groups of ecclesiologies will illuminate this point.

First are those churches that see in the apostolic faith embodied in the biblical witness and lived out in the 2,000 years of Christian tradition, specific evangelical requirements for church life. While their church organizations may differ, this group is inclined to see questions of polity and doctrine as central to the ecumenical dialogue. Unity for mission comes about only with careful attention to those doctrinal and ecclesiastical questions that separate the churches. For these churches, biblical, historical and ecclesiological reflection is at the heart of the ecumenical movement.

Second are those churches that see the unity of the church rooted in a common confession of Jesus as Lord, without specific doctrinal or confessional formulation of that recognition. For these churches, the unity of the church is a spiritual reality already established by faith in Jesus Christ and by the presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer. In this view, the various communions of Christendom merely "denominate" various branches of a church already united in the Spirit. For these, denominationalism may be a providential institutionalization of Christian pluralism, and not an affront to the biblical doctrine of the Church. For these churches discussions of doctrine, polity and ecclesiology are secondary to the unity that already exists for common mission.

Thus, in one of these approaches, the division of the church is presumed and the unity is to be restored. For the other the unity of the church is presumed and we act together to manifest that unity.

The 17 position papers of the 27 churches that participated in the study embody theological reflections important for informing NCCCUSA members, the UFMCC, and individual church members.

The responses of the churches vary widely as to how they would suggest a consistent vote might be given to the application, and the full documentation of these responses is available.[7] However, in response to the question "Is the UFMCC a 'church qualifying for membership'?" the participants in the first dialogue responded in three categories:

A) that according to the purpose of the NCCCUSA and in the understanding of the UFMCC as presented in their documentation they would find it impossible to conclude that the UFMCC is a "church qualifying for membership." It needs to be kept in mind that this conclusion is based on the different theological perspectives in such communions as Lutheran, Eastern and Oriental Orthodox, American Baptist, African Methodist Episcopal, Christian Methodist Episcopal, Moravian, some Presbyterians and the United Church of Christ. This conclusion comes from different ecclesiological understandings of member communions in the light of the Preamble and Purpose of the NCCCUSA.

B) that the UFMCC do fulfill the requirements because at the core of their life they have an evangelical commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Moreover they bring a unique commitment to ministry to homosexuals. This conclusion, likewise, comes from different perspectives in such communions as the United Methodist, the Friends, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and some other Presbyterians.

C) that the issue is not clear and would only become so — so that a judgment could be made — when the experience together with this community would lead them to know or not to know this community as a "church". For those churches the judgment cannot be made in an experiential vacuum on the basis of statements of belief. This is the position of the Church of the Brethren.[8]

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[7] *Documentation*, see note 5.

[8] *Midstream, op. cit.*, paragraph 22.

In addition to this response the ecumenical and pastoral implications of a vote, either way, were reported out.

Different lenses, different views

Member churches have differing expectations relative to fellowship in the NCCCUSA. For some, the central ecumenical agenda is restoration of church unity through discussion of historic division. For others, collaboration in evangelism, service and the educational task of the church is crucial. For still others, coalitions around specific issues of justice within the world are at the centre. The challenge of the Faith and Order study has been to see that the theological integrity of each church is respected. Where issues of theology are raised by one church, commitment to a community demands the attentive dialogue of each partner in the discussion.

Since the WCC's Toronto Statement, the churches have moved from ecclesial neutrality to a greater recognition of one another as churches.[9] This ecumenical progress, reflected in the NCCCUSA's new "Preamble and Purpose", will require greater care in the membership process in councils at all levels where the unity agenda is taken seriously. Through the years strides have been made towards resolving some church divisions by common scholarship in history and scripture, but there is still no organic unity among NCCCUSA members, so that when it comes together it comes together in ecumenical dialogue. Progress in many areas, particularly in the bilateral conversations and the WCC Faith and Order Commisssion in fields like conciliar fellowship, Christology, pneumatology, authority, baptism, eucharist and ministry, still leave a long agenda ahead in reconciling the diversities of ecclesiologies in member churches.

Clearly, many underlying theological questions remain at issue. One recurring question has been: How effective a vehicle can the NCCCUSA be for fostering the visible unity of the church if the UFMCC becomes a member? The narrowness of its organizing principle, the new biblical insights it claims, and the challenge that these raise to biblical ecclesiology are problems for many. The New Testament provides many images of the church which form the bases for the theology and church order of existing churches: mystery-sacrament, body of Christ, people of God, ordered community under apostolic authority, husband and wife, new Israel and so forth. Since this is the first time that anthropological and ethical issues have emerged in questions of membership, it requires new perspectives, and as a result has a significance for ecumenical reflection far beyond the outcome of the vote on UFMCC membership.

Over the years many voices have asked about the significance of ethical divisions for the ecumenical movement. Stands on abortion, apartheid, and, increasingly, nuclear war are beginning to reach the *status confessionis* in certain communions. Is the experience occasioning the formation of the UFMCC a fundamental one which will become increasingly relevant to ecumenical dialogue?

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[9] W. A. Visser 't Hooft, *The Genesis and Formation of the World Council of Churches*, WCC, 1982, p. 112.

The final report is now complete. It was submitted "with reservation in that we believe the process did not give us sufficient time to engage the theological task adequately".[10] Nonetheless, the Commission was able to outline specific theological divergences in theological anthropology, pastoral ministry and expectations for diversity within the NCCCUSA. It recommended to Governing Board members direct experience with the UFMCC members through worship and conversation — an experience many commissioners felt helped to enrich their dialogue at the March meeting. The Commission intends to seek ways to continue the dialogue with UFMCC members on a regular basis. It also recommended a pastoral letter, hearkening to the Pauline style of dealing with controversial issues in the churches and urged greater attention to fostering mutual understanding among NCCCUSA member churches. Finally, in light of the Commission's finding that the new "Preamble and Purpose" does not express a sufficient understanding of the church to prescribe how the communions should vote, the Commission called for further constitutional revision.

During the year of this study the work of the Commission has been characterized by some as the "Holy Office of the Inquisition" for the NCCCUSA, overseeing the theological integrity of its members. It has also been caricatured as the agency for promoting the cause of the UFMCC's membership in the NCCCUSA. These characterizations may say more about those who made them than the work of the Commission. But as Barbara Brown Zikmund indicated in her oral presentation of the report (published in full in the *Los Angeles Times*): "I am thankful for this dialogue. I do not want any vote to come too hastily, because I believe that we need to explore more deeply the different views that we have about human nature, authority and ministry. I know that I can learn from my sisters and brothers in the Universal Fellowship of the Metropolitan Community Churches.

"I refuse to believe that, in our broken world, the benefits of ecumenical fellowship must be surrendered to preserve the integrity of theological principles."[11]

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Where this study is being taken into account within NCCCUSA member churches, the understanding of human sexuality and of outreach to gay and lesbian Christians will be reassessed, and pastoral concern may be deepened. Within member communions where the dialogue is being taken seriously, there may be a deepened appreciation of the ecclesiological, ecumenical fellowship and pastoral commitments of other member churches. The Council itself is beginning to see the essential place of Christian theology in its life, and the importance of expanding its commitment to Faith and Order. There are voices in the Panel on Future Mission and Purpose of the Council calling for a better trained, more ecumenically informed and committed Governing Board and new styles of decision-making that allow

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[10] *Midstream, op. cit.*, preface.

[11] *The Los Angeles Times*, 22 May 1983, Part IV.

Christians with radically different confessional stands and approaches to worship to get to know each other better. The process of study and dialogue might continue and encourage churches to become more reconciling; or it might break down and turn to political posturing. Either possibility will provide an indication of how effective the revised "Preamble and Purpose" will become as an instrument of reform within the life of the NCCCUSA.

Ecumenical Chronicle

STATEMENTS BY THE WCC SIXTH ASSEMBLY

The following statements were made by the Sixth Assembly of the WCC, held in Vancouver, Canada, 24 July to 10 August 1983. The principle criteria used in selecting issues on which public statements are made are the following. "(1) areas and issues on which the WCC has had direct involvement and long-standing commitment; (2) emerging issues of international concern to which the attention of the churches should be called for action; (3) critical and developing political situations which demand the WCC to make known its judgment and lend its spiritual and moral voice; (4) expectations from the member churches that the WCC should speak; and (5) to set a policy mandate for the WCC secretariat."

STATEMENT ON PEACE AND JUSTICE

1. Humanity is now living in the dark shadow of an arms race more intense, and of systems of injustice more widespread, more dangerous and more costly than the world has ever known. Never before has the human race been as close as it is now to total self-destruction. Never before have so many lived in the grip of deprivation and oppression.

2. Under that shadow we have gathered here at the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches (Vancouver, 1983) to proclaim our common faith in Jesus Christ, the Life of the World, and to say to the world:

- fear not, for Christ has overcome the forces of evil; in Him are all things made new;
- fear not; for the love of God, rise up for justice and for peace;
- trust in the power of Christ who reigns over all; give witness to Him in word and in deed, regardless of the cost.

Growing threats to justice and peace

3. Still we are moved to repentence as we consider with alarm the rapidity with which the threats to justice and survival have grown since we last met. The frantic race towards nuclear conflagration has accelerated sharply. In an incredibly short period of history, we have moved from the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the threat that they might be repeated elsewhere, to the likelihood, unless we act now, that life on the whole planet could be devastated. A moment of madness, a miscalculated strategic adventure, a chance combination of computer errors, a misperception of the other's intention, an honest mistake — any one could now set off a nuclear holocaust.

4. As we have been reminded dramatically during this Assembly, nuclear weapons claim victims even in the absence of war, through the lasting effects of nuclear bombings, weapons testing and the dumping of nuclear wastes.

5. For many millions, however, the most immediate threat to survival is not posed by nuclear weapons. Local, national and international conflicts rage around the world. The intersection of East-West and North-South conflicts results in massive injustice, systematic violation of human rights, oppression, homelessness, starvation and death for masses of people. Millions have been rendered stateless, expelled from their homes as refugees or exiles.

6. The World Council of Churches has consistently drawn the attention of the churches to the economic threats to peace. Even without war, thousands perish daily in nations both rich and poor because of hunger and starvation. Human misery and suffering as a result of various forms of injustice have reached levels unprecedented in modern times. There is a resurgence of racism, often in itself a cause of war. Peoples continue to be driven, as a last resort, to take up arms to defend themselves against systematic violence, or to claim their rights to self-determination or independence.

7. While the equivalent of nearly two billion dollars (US) is being expended globally each day for armaments, the world economy is engulfed in a prolonged and deepening crisis which threatens every country and international security. The spectre of trade warfare, competitive devaluation and financial collapse is omnipresent. This crisis has contributed to even greater injustice for the developing countries, denying millions of the basic necessities of life. The failure of UNCTAD VI has dashed hopes for meaningful North-South dialogue. While many factors are involved, the link between the arms race and economic development, the effects of rising defense budgets and accelerated reliance on arms production in the industrialized nations, and the ensuing strain on the international system as a whole pose special threats to peace and justice.

No peace without justice

8. The peoples of the world stand in need of peace and justice. Peace is not just the absence of war. Peace cannot be built on foundations of injustice. Peace requires a new international order based on justice for and within all the nations, and respect for the God-given humanity and dignity of every person. Peace is, as the Prophet Isaiah has taught us, the effect of righteousness.

9. *The churches today are called to confess anew their faith, and to repent for the times when Christians have remained silent in the face of injustice or threats to peace. The biblical vision of peace with justice for all, of wholeness, of unity for all God's people is not one of several options for the followers of Christ. It is an imperative in our time.*

10. The ecumenical approach to peace and justice is based on the belief that without justice for all everywhere we shall never have peace anywhere. From its inception, peace with justice has been a central concern of the ecumenical movement. The World Council of Churches was conceived amid the rumblings of looming world wars. Ever since it was formed it has condemned war, and engaged almost constantly in efforts to prevent war, to aid the victims of war and to keep war from breaking out anew. It has exposed the injustices that lead to conflict, affirmed its solidarity with groups and movements struggling for justice and peace, and sought to establish channels of communication leading to the peaceful resolution of conflicts. It has repeatedly called the attention of the churches and through them the governments and the general public to the threats to peace, the threats to survival, and the deepening crisis. *But we face an even more critical situation now. More than ever before it is imperative that Christians and churches join their struggles for peace and justice.*

Rampant militarism

11. Through the Council's work on militarism since the Fifth Assembly (Nairobi, 1975), we have come to understand more fully the dire consequences for justice of the increasing reliance of the nations on armed force as the cornerstone of their foreign —

and often domestic — policies. Priorities have been dangerously distorted. Attention has been drawn away from the fundamental rights and needs of poor nations and of the poor within the rich nations. The number of military regimes has grown, contributing further to a largely male-dominated process of global militarization. Justice is often sacrificed on the altar of narrowly perceived national security interests. Racial, ethnic, cultural, religious and ideological conflicts are exacerbated, corruption is rife, a spirit of fear and suspicion is fostered through the increasing portrayal of others as the enemy : all this further contributes to disunity, human suffering and increased threats to peace.

12. We strongly reiterate the Central Committee's appeals to the churches to :

a) challenge military and militaristic policies that lead to disastrous distortions of foreign policy sapping the capacity of the nations of the world to deal with pressing economic and social problems which have become a paramount political issue of our times;

b) counter the trend to characterise those of other nations and ideologies as the "enemy" through the promotion of hatred and prejudice;

c) assist in demythologizing current doctrines of national security and elaborate new concepts of security based on justice and the rights of the peoples;

d) grapple with the important theological issues posed by new developments related to war and peace and examine the challenges posed to traditional positions;

e) pay serious attention to the rights of conscientious objectors;

f) continue... to call attention to the root causes of war, mainly to economic injustice, oppression and exploitation and to the consequences of increasing tension including further restrictions of human rights.

Justice and security

13. The blatant misuse of the concept of national security to justify repression, foreign intervention and spiralling arms budgets is of profound concern. No nation can pretend to be secure so long as others' legitimate rights to sovereignty and security are neglected or denied. Security can therefore be achieved only as a common enterprise of nations but security is also inseparable from justice. A concept of "common security" of nations must be reinforced by a concept of "people's security". True security for the people demands respect for human rights, including the right to self-determination, as well as social and economic justice for all within every nation, and a political framework that would ensure it.

Peaceful resolution of conflicts

14. In this connection the growing refusal of many governments to use the opportunities afforded by the United Nations to preserve international peace and security and for the peaceful resolution of conflicts, or to heed its resolutions is deeply troubling. We call upon the governments to reaffirm their commitment to the United Nations Charter, to submit interstate conflicts to the Security Council at an early stage when resolution may still be possible short of the use of massive armed force, and to cooperate with it in the pursuit of peaceful solutions. *We draw special attention to the United Nations "International Year of Peace" (1986) and the "World Disarmament Campaign", urging the churches to use them as important opportunities for the strengthening of international security and the promotion of disarmament, peace and justice.*

Nuclear weapons and disarmament

15. It is now a full decade since there has been any substantial, subsequently ratified measure of arms control. Since our last Assembly, global military expenditures have tripled. This past year has marked a new peak of confrontation between NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organisation. There is the real prospect, if the current negotiations in Geneva between the USA and the USSR fail to prevent it, that the world stockpile of nuclear weapons may increase dramatically in the next decade. The growing sophistication, accuracy and mobility of new generations of weapons now ready for deployment or currently being designed make them more dangerous and destabilising than ever before. The failure of arms control among nuclear-weapon states has made the non-proliferation treaty, in practice, an instrument of invidious discrimination, incited the spread of nuclear weapons, and compounded the prospects for nuclear war in several areas of regional tension in the Southern hemisphere. Until the superpowers move decisively toward nuclear disarmament, efforts to contain nuclear proliferation are bound to fail.

16. *We call upon the churches, especially those in Europe, both East and West, and in North America, to redouble their efforts to convince their governments to reach a negotiated settlement and to turn away now, before it is too late, from plans to deploy additional or new nuclear weapons in Europe, and to begin immediately to reduce and then eliminate altogether present nuclear forces.*

17. *We urge the churches as well to intensify their efforts to stop the rapidly growing deployment of nuclear weapons and support systems in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, and to press their governments to withdraw from or refuse to base or service ships or airplanes bearing nuclear weapons in those regions.*

18. The risk of nuclear war is compounded by the rapidly escalating reliance on conventional weapons. Stockpiles of non-nuclear weapons of mass destruction and indiscriminate effect are growing almost uncontrolled. The volume of highly profitable trade in conventional weapons has nearly doubled in the past five years, a very large part of it in the direction of the developing nations and regions where armed conflict already defies containment. The destructive power of these weapons steadily increases, blurring the distinction between conventional and nuclear warfare; and many nuclear disarmament strategies call for major increases in conventional arms production and deployment.

19. Since the Nairobi Assembly, a number of consultations and conferences have been held by the WCC, providing churches with opportunities to deepen their understanding of these issues. From them have come valuable reports and recommendations to the churches for concrete action. The most recent was the Public Hearing on Nuclear Weapons and Disarmament (Amsterdam, 1981). The published report contains careful, thoroughgoing analyses and spells out urgent tasks for the churches. We urge the churches once again to study attentively these reports and to pursue their recommendations.

20. The Central Committee urged the churches to pay special attention to and take clear positions on a number of points developed in the report of the Amsterdam Hearing. We reiterate that appeal with respect to the following:

a) a nuclear war can under no circumstances, in no region and by no social system be just or justifiable, given the fact that the magnitude of devastation caused by it will be far out of proportion to any conceivable benefit or advantage to be derived from it;

b) nuclear war is unlikely to remain limited, and therefore any contemplation of "limited" use of nuclear weapons should be discouraged as dangerous from the outset;

c) all nations now possessing nuclear weapons or capable of doing so in the foreseeable future should unequivocally renounce policies of "first use", as an immediate step towards building confidence;

d) the concept of deterrence, the credibility of which depends on the possible use of nuclear weapons, is to be rejected as morally unacceptable and as incapable of safeguarding peace and security in the long-term;

e) the production and deployment of nuclear weapons as well as their use constitute a crime against humanity, and therefore there should be a complete halt in the production of nuclear weapons and in weapons research and development in all nations, to be expeditiously enforced through a treaty; such a position supports the struggle to cause one's own nation to commit itself never to own or use nuclear weapons, despite the period of nuclear vulnerability and to encourage and stand in solidarity with Christians and others who refuse to co-operate with or accept employment in any projects related to nuclear weapons and nuclear warfare;

f) all nations should agree to and ratify a comprehensive test ban treaty as a necessary step to stopping the further development of nuclear weapons technology;

g) all means leading to disarmament, both nuclear and conventional, should be welcomed as complementary and mutually reinforcing: multilateral conferences leading to effective decisions, bilateral negotiations pursued with daring and determination and unilateral initiatives leading to the relaxation of tensions and building of mutual confidence among nations and peoples.

21. In addition, we urge the churches to press their governments to abstain from any further research, production or deployment of weapons in space; and to prohibit the development and production of all weapons of mass destruction or indiscriminate effect, including chemical and biological means.

Challenge to the churches

22. In our efforts since the last Assembly to accomplish the purpose of the World Council of Churches "to express the common concern of the churches in the service of human need, the breaking down of barriers between people, and the promotion of one human family in justice and peace", we have been encouraged and strengthened by the movement of the Holy Spirit among us, leading the churches to undertake new initiatives. In this process of conversion the insights and the leadership of women and youth have often been decisive. But our common faith and the times now demand much more of us as stewards of God's Creation.

23. Christians cannot view the dangers of this moment as inherent in the nature of things. Nor can we give ourselves over to despair. As believers in One Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, we are stewards of God's hope for the future of creation. We know God's love and confess a Lord of history in whom we have the promise of the fullness of life. God's mercy is everlasting, and the Holy Spirit is moving among us, kindling the love which drives out fear, renewing our vision of peace, stirring our imaginations, leading us through the wilderness, freeing us and uniting us. The peoples of the world are coming to their feet in growing numbers, demanding justice, crying out for peace. These are present signs of hope.

24. We have recognized that our approaches to justice and peace often differ, as do the starting points for discussion among the churches, due to the wide diversity of our histories, traditions and the contexts in which we live and witness. *We call upon the churches now to:*

(a) *intensify their efforts to develop a common witness in a divided world, confronting with renewed vigor the threats to peace and survival and engaging in struggles for justice and human dignity;*
(b) *become a living witness to peace and justice through prayer, worship and concrete involvement;*
(c) *take steps toward unity through providing more frequent opportunities for sharing in and among the churches in order to learn more about and understand better each other's perspectives, defying every attempt to divide or separate us;* and
(d) *develop more innovative approaches to programmes of education for peace and justice.*

25. According to the 1980 Geneva Convention, the use of certain weapons of indiscriminate effect is forbidden under international law. We believe nuclear weapons must be considered within that category. We express the conviction drawn by the Panel of the WCC Public Hearing on Nuclear Weapons and Disarmament after it had examined the testimony of a broad range of expert witnesses:

"*We believe that the time has come when the churches must unequivocally declare that the production and deployment as well as the use of nuclear weapons are a crime against humanity and that such activities must be condemned on ethical and theological grounds.* The nuclear weapons issue is, in its import and threat to humanity, a question of Christian discipline and faithfulness to the Gospel. We recognize that nuclear weapons will not disappear because of such an affirmation by the churches. But it will involve the churches and their members in a fundamental examination of their own implicit or explicit support of policies which, implicitly or explicitly, are based on the possession and use of these weapons."

We urge the churches to press their governments, especially in those countries which have nuclear weapons capabilities, to elaborate and ratify an international legal instrument which would outlaw as a crime against humanity the possession as well as the use of nuclear arms. We ask the churches as well to urge their governments to acknowledge the right of conscientious objection to military service and to provide opportunities for non-violent alternative service.

26. On the same basis, and in the spirit of the Fifth Assembly's appeal to the churches "to emphasize their readiness to live without the protection of armaments", *we believe that Christians should give witness to their unwillingness to participate in any conflict involving weapons of mass destruction or indiscriminate effect.*

27. It is with a deep sense of pastoral responsibility that we make these affirmations. To live up to them will be no simple matter for any Christian or church, but we recognize that the consequences of taking such positions will be far more serious for some than for others. We state these convictions not as a condemnation or in judgement of others, but confessing our own weakness, *calling on the churches and Christians to support one another in love as in these ways we seek together to be faithful to our common calling to proclaim and serve our one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, the Life of the World.*

STATEMENT ON HUMAN RIGHTS

1. The World Council of Churches Sixth Assembly rejoices and gives thanks to God for the increasing commitment to work for the realization of human rights which has been demonstrated in the life and work of the churches throughout the world since the Nairobi Assembly. Many persons, including Christians and their leaders have been imprisoned, tortured or have lost their lives in service to God and humanity. The ecumenical community has increasingly participated in concrete expressions of international solidarity in the struggle for human dignity, often through the World Council of Churches and regional, national and local ecumenical bodies.

2. Cooperation in the field of human rights is emerging between the Christian community and peoples of other living faiths and ideologies, based on their common commitment to human values and social goals.

3. And yet, the tasks have become more difficult, the violations of human rights in many parts of the world have become more widespread and severe, and churches must confess in humility that they have not done enough to counter forces of evil and death, at times even being in complicity with them.

4. As the theme of this Assembly affirms, Jesus Christ is the life of the world. All human beings, regardless of race, sex or belief have been created by God as individuals and in human community. Yet the world has been corrupted by sin, which results in the destruction of human relationships. In reconciling humankind and creation with God, Jesus Christ has also reconciled human beings with each other. Love of our neighbours is the essence of obedience to God.

Lessons from the past

5. Drawing on the "International Bill of Human Rights" (the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights together with its Optional Protocol) and after extensive consultations among the churches, the Nairobi Assembly affirmed its commitment to the promotion of human rights under the following categories: the right to basic guarantees of life; the rights to self-determination, to cultural identity and the rights of minorities; the right to participate in decision-making within the community; the right to dissent; the right to personal dignity; and the right to religious freedom. Following Nairobi the churches have seen the need to broaden their understanding of human rights to include the right to peace, the right to protection of the environment, the right to development and the right to know one's rights and to struggle for them. We have also come to appreciate more clearly the complexity and inter-relatedness of human rights. In this regard we recognize the need to set individual rights and their violation in the context of society and its social structures.

6. We are increasingly aware of the fact that human rights cannot be dealt with in isolation from the larger issues of peace, justice, militarism, disarmament and development. The fuller the rights that every person enjoys in society, the more stable that society is likely to be; the fuller the implementation of human rights globally, the more stable international relations are likely to be. Injustice in a society, including the corruption of public officials, may contribute to domestic, economic and political disorder, which in turn may lead to the deterioration in relations among nations.

7. We have moved beyond mere reflection to concrete engagement in human rights struggles. In doing so, however, we have discovered how difficult and painful it is to cope with human rights and their violations. We have found that in promoting the rights of women, youth, children, and disabled persons, for example, the churches need to examine and often alter their own structures and methods of operation. In struggling for justice many Christians are experiencing the way of the cross.

Future agenda

8. While recognizing the positive work undertaken by churches, we cannot ignore the general deterioration in the quality of life and the emergence of new forms of human degradation. The prolonged economic disorder has further aggravated an already grave situation, driving some countries to the brink of bankruptcy, leaving millions unemployed, and especially in the developing nations, denying additional millions the basic necessities of life. Of the many pressing problems and emerging trends facing the Christian community, the following call for our special concern and commitment at the time of our Sixth Assembly.

8. 1. Many Christians have discovered that freedom of expression and freedom of association are indispensable as means to promote a life of dignity in their societies. We must reaffirm our commitment to those freedoms and our support for those who in exercising them are suffering.

8. 2. Increasingly sophisticated forms of physical and psychological torture, the practice of "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions have not only been used more widely throughout the world, but have in many countries become standard procedures of military and police forces. The Sixth Assembly endorses the Central Committee Statements that condemn the practice of torture (1977) and extrajudicial executions (1982), calls upon the churches to engage in extensive human rights education programmes with a view to improving public understanding of these atrocities, and urge member churches and their governments to cooperate with the UN and other governmental and non-governmental bodies in this regard.

8. 3. We have been vividly reminded during this Assembly of the plight of indigenous people. Deprived of any real political power, they are often unable to resist the expropriation of their lands, their physical relocations and the denial of their right to maintain their cultural identity. In supporting the Central Committee Statement on the "Land Rights of Indigenous People" (1982), we call upon the churches to identify with the struggle of the indigenous people, including the provision of financial and human resources; to cooperate with indigenous people's organizations, to urge their governments to ratify and implement all relevant UN instruments; to make determined efforts to settle outstanding land rights claims of indigenous people, including those involving churches; and to monitor implementation of such settlements to assure that governments respect the spirit as well as the letter of these laws.

8. 4. The employment of a doctrine of national security to justify the denial of basic human rights has in recent years acquired a wider geographical application. While national security is a legitimate concern of all states, the churches must resist its perversion such as the ever increasing militarization of society to preserve an unjust status quo or ensure the perpetuation of those in power thereby sanctioning a persistent and widening violation of human rights, including in some cases genocide.

8. 5. In some areas, the growing climate of religious fanaticism and the rise of political fundamentalism have seriously threatened the rights of churches and other religious communities to manifest their faith in worship, observance, practice and teaching. While we welcome the long-awaited adoption of the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination based on Religion or Belief, we fear that the Declaration does not offer sufficient protection against specific problems facing religious communities today. It is therefore imperative that member churches and the WCC continue to identify and denounce gross violations of religious freedom and extend moral and material assistance to those who suffer oppression and even persecution because of their religious beliefs and practices. Churches and church communities which suffer repression or even persecution because of their spiritual, cultural and ethnic identity or minority position should enjoy the solidarity of other churches particularly within their own nation, as an expression of their fellowship in the one body of Christ.

8. 6. In many countries churches are called to take new and firm steps to support the right of workers to establish and join trade unions which genuinely represent their interests, and their freedom to cooperate actively with each other both within their nation and internationally.

8. 7. Of growing concern to the ecumenical community is the present predicament of refugees throughout the world. A new dimension added to the existing suffering of refugees involves the difficulty they have had in availing themselves of effective protection. This new factor is due to the refusal by many governments to admit asylum-seekers across their boundaries and the imposition of visa requirements to curtail the

flow of refugees; to arbitrary detentions and expulsions without due process of law; and to attacks on defenceless refugees by military and paramilitary forces. We appeal to the WCC and member churches to intensify their efforts at the national and international levels to ensure compliance of all refugee receiving countries with international conventions and to identify and respond to situations that lead to the creation of refugees.

8. 8. We express great concern for migrant workers who, in ever increasing numbers, face the prevailing problems of unemployment and deprivation of civil liberties in their own countries or in the countries of their adoption. We urge the World Council of Churches to encourage the churches in those countries to take positive action on their behalf.

Implementation

9. In the name of Jesus Christ, the life of the world, we reaffirm in fellowship our common commitment to work even more fervently for the elimination of all forms of inhumanity, brutality, discrimination, persecution and oppression, both within our own countries and situations, and in ecumenical solidarity on a regional and world level. As discrepancies inevitably exist between what we profess and what we practise, we must move beyond making declarations about human rights and duties, to making more effective use of existing mechanisms and to devising where necessary, new means for meeting this challenge.

9. 1. In working for the implementation of human rights, we urge the World Council of Churches and its member churches to continue their practice of a pastoral approach, which combines prayer, preaching and practical efforts in action.

9. 2. We appeal to the churches to dedicate themselves with renewed vigour to raising the consciousness of the people concerning their profound responsibility for the implementation of human rights and for the demonstration of their biblical foundation.

9. 3. The churches and the ecumenical movement should strengthen their work of monitoring, advocacy and study in which they are already engaged.

9. 4. Additional financial resources must be made available by the churches to carry out their own programmes in human rights and to cooperate ecumenically.

9. 5. Considerable thought needs to be given to the development of new initiatives in order to improve the churches' record of implementation. Among the possible initiatives that might be undertaken are the announcement of an international day of prayer for human rights, the creation of a world action week for the education of church members and the promotion of human rights, and the establishment of a series of regional and global review conferences to evaluate the work done by the churches in the field of human rights.

9. 6. We urge the continuation of the World Council of Churches Human Rights Programme and recommend that the Human Rights Advisory Group, meeting regularly and with a more clearly focussed mandate, should be maintained to assist the churches and the World Council of Churches in their promotion of human rights.

9. 7. While recognizing that Eats-West tensions are only part of the tragic divisions of humanity, we welcome the work of the Churches' Human Rights Programme for the Implementation of the Helsinki Final Act, as a model of regional and interregional consultation and cooperation, complementing and strengthening initiatives at the world level.

10. We urgently appeal directly to all governments of the world to adopt and ratify intergovernmental instruments of human rights, to respect the rights included in these agree-

ments and to promote by all means both in law and in practice their fuller realization in every country.

11. In the midst of a world of suffering and death, we are called to witness to Jesus Christ, the life of the world. We affirm God's gift of life which is entrusted to our care and nurture, to be lived fully in unity with all those who share this precious gift and therefore in respect of the rule of law in defence of justice. It is life lived in Christ which unites us in prayer and active solidarity with all those whose lives are threatened by the forces of death in our world.

STATEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL FOOD DISORDER

1. The scandal of hunger calls for the immediate attention of the churches. Estimates are that at a minimum there are 400 million people in the world who do not receive adequate sustenance of food. Many die for lack of food; many more suffer from diseases and disabilities caused by insufficient or unbalanced diet. It is often children who are the victims of malnutrition and who are deprived of the possibility of fullness of life.

2. The World Council of Churches has for years responded to calls for emergency help in situations of drought and famine. At its Fifth Assembly in Nairobi, 1975, the WCC lifted up for the churches' attention the crises of famine and mass malnutrition and the questions related to policies of food production and distribution. The Assembly called for response to both "present-day hunger problems and to the difficult long-term solutions". The WCC Central Committee, meeting in 1980, again placed before the attention of the churches and the public the scandal of hunger, noting its belief that access to adequate nutrition is a fundamental human right.

3. There has been in recent years a significant increase in world food production but starvation and malnutrition are at a crisis level in many countries due to the inability of the rural and urban poor to produce or purchase food. The present international food disorder is rooted thus in mismanagement of food resources. The current misuse of natural resources also calls for attention to the problems which may arise in providing adequate food for future generations.

4. The present patterns of production and distribution of food have led to a serious disorder in the international food markets. Many countries of the South produce food which is often insufficient for a balanced diet for their people. They are therefore forced to buy from the world market and to depend on external food aid. Much of their agricultural production is aimed at and therefore dependent on markets of the wealthier nations. The agricultural infrastructure, research and finance are often aimed at improving the production of crops for export, rather than producing food which can be consumed by the people of the producing countries. At the same time, industrialized countries are seeking to reduce production levels on their land so that prices for their crops will continue to rise.

5. Food has also been used in international affairs as a political weapon for bargaining among nations and within nations. Where persons or nations have been perceived to be unfriendly or strategically unimportant, food has often been denied. We emphasize that food must not be used as a political weapon. Every person has a fundamental and unconditional human right to adequate food. Furthermore, every nation has the right to self-determination and self-reliance, and under no circumstances should food supplies be used to control or limit that right.

6. The development of technologies of food production, which require the use of chemical inputs, has in certain instances hampered food production in the developing

countries which have received chemicals banned as unfit for use in the industrially developed world. It is critical that the distribution of unsafe chemicals be halted and that education about the use of chemical substances be provided for farming communities.

7. The causes of the food disorder are also located within nations. In many countries, in both industrialized and developing nations, much of the productive land is controlled by large land owners and transnational corporations who exploit the land and do not allow the farmers, peasants, and landless rural workers to participate in making decisions which would benefit them. As a result, small farmers are often forced off their land and reduced to poverty. In addition, efficient transportation and marketing of food for domestic consumption are often lacking. Within many countries both land reform and a reorientation of agricultural research, extension, infrastructure and marketing to serve the interests of peasant farmers are urgently needed if the growth of rural and urban malnutrition is to be halted and reversed.

8. Related to these concerns about the policies of food production and distribution is the effect of these policies on the natural resources of the earth. Natural calamities have been exacerbated by the mismanagement of resources. The problems which hamper food production today and which cause grave concern for the future include not only soil erosion, deforestation, drought, ineffective water conservation and irrigation systems, but also the under-utilization of land and human resources, sometimes due to war and refugee crises. In addition, unequal land allocation and resettlement of refugees sometimes result in over-utilization of land reducing its long-term potential.

9. The Sixth Assembly of the WCC, meeting in Vancouver, Canada, in 1983, has as its theme, "Jesus Christ — the Life of the World". We believe that this theme calls us to respond urgently to the international food disorder.

10. The reality of hunger reminds us of the many biblical accounts which link one's response to Christ with a response to the hungry of the world. To feed or not to feed them is indeed to do likewise to Christ (Matt. 25:35-42). Through the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus showed his disciples that by his will there could be ample food to feed the hungry; (John 6:1-14) and in this context he said "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). During this Assembly we have celebrated the gift of life in its fullness, the eucharistic life to which Jesus calls his Church. The ecumenical text on "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" reminds us that "the eucharistic celebration demands reconciliation and sharing among all those regarded as brothers and sisters in the one family of God, and is a constant challenge in the search for appropriate relationships in social, economic and political life" (Eucharist, D. 20).

11. We believe that food is a gift from God which through human labour serves for the sustenance of life in its fullness. The ordinance of the jubilee year in Leviticus 25 reminds us that the life sustaining resources of the world as gifts from God are to be distributed justly among all people and redistributed regularly to allow for self-reliance of all.

12. We are called to confess our failure. The fact that so many are hungry shows that we have failed to be faithful and responsible stewards of God's creation.

13. We call upon member churches to take action to redress the international food disorder by :

a) Strengthening ecumenical structures for meeting emergency and short-term food needs.

b) Building ecumenical support for long-term solutions to the problem of hunger through appropriate policies, including increased access to land and to work for rural and urban poor, husbanding and renewing of natural resources, greater self-reliance in basic food production and more equitable structures of international trade in agricultural products.

c) Continuing educational programmes on the causes of hunger and the international food disorder.

d) Monitoring policies of governments, international agencies and transnational corporations regarding food production, distribution and land reform.

e) Developing programmes of advocacy and support for the participation of the poor in the production of food and in the distribution of food resources.

f) Recognizing and encouraging specific programmes of international aid for agricultural research in support of the production of food for consumption by the people of the producing country.

g) Engaging in more generous and effective sharing within congregations and communities as well as nationally and internationally of resources relevant to the provision of food and to the ability to produce it.

h) Supporting efforts for peace and justice and human rights which will counteract the forces which divert resources from production and just distribution of food.

i) Taking leadership in preparing for the future, working with the scientific community to ensure that the causes of the international food disorder will be addressed in any technological developments.

j) Being advocates for communities and movements of farmers and landless rural workers.

k) Denouncing current policies that the International Monetary Fund imposes on nations in debt, which result in the reduction of food available to the poor, thereby increasing malnutrition, hunger-related diseases and infant mortality.

l) Investigating and taking action on the investments of church funds and use of church land so that they support agricultural and rural development in which people participate fully.

m) Supporting churches and movements which are working to alleviate the effects and causes of hunger in various nations and communities throughout the world.

STATEMENT ON THE MIDDLE EAST

1. The increasingly dangerous situation in the Middle East threatens the peace of the whole world and places heavy demands on all those striving for justice and freedom.

The Middle East is a region of special interest as the birthplace of three monotheistic religions. The churches in the area have their roots from apostolic times. Their continued presence and active participation in the life of the whole area, despite suffering at various periods, is a remarkable witness to the faith. They are facing new challenges and attempting to respond through new forms of witness. While only the churches of the Middle East can determine the nature and forms of their witness, it behoves all churches to strengthen their presence and support their ministry, especially the ministry of reconciliation and witness for peace. Historical factors and certain theological interpretations have often confused Christians outside in evaluating the religious and political developments in the Middle East.

2. Recent developments in the region have further pushed back prospects for peace. The agony of the Lebanese war is not yet over. The integrity and independence of Lebanon are in greater danger than ever. The Israeli settlement policy on the West Bank has resulted in a *de facto* annexation giving final touches to a discriminatory policy of development of peoples that flagrantly violates the basic rights of the Palestinian people. There are fears of relocation of the inhabitants on the West Bank and their expulsion. A large number of Palestinians are under detention in the prisons on the West Bank and in camps in Lebanon. There is escalation of tension in the occupied territories. The consensus among the Arab nations appears to have been lost. External and internal pressures have caused serious rift within the Palestinian movement. In many situations there are increasing violations of human rights, especially of minorities and religious fanaticism is a bane of many communities. The Iran-Iraqi war continues to claim an increasing toll of lives and complicates inter-Arab relations. Tension is increasing in relation to Cyprus.

3. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict

i) We reaffirm the principles previously enunciated by the WCC as the basis on which a peaceful settlement can be reached. The UN Security Council Resolution 242 and all other relevant UN resolutions need to be revised and implemented taking into account changes that have occurred since 1967 and that such revisions should express the following principles in a manner that would ensure:

a) the withdrawal of Israeli troops from all territories occupied in 1967;

b) the right of all states, including Israel and Arab states, to live in peace with secure and recognized boundaries;

c) the implementation of the rights of the Palestinians to self-determination including the right of establishing a sovereign Palestinian state.

ii) We reaffirm that the Middle East conflict cannot be resolved through the use of force but only through peaceful means. Negotiations for a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East should include all those parties most intimately involved: the state of Israel, the Palestine Liberation Organisation and neighbouring Arab states. The interests of the world at large are best represented through the United Nations and the USA and the USSR have a special responsibility in this matter.

iii) Churches should undertake the following with a view to facilitating processes towards negotiations:

a) to build greater awareness among the churches about the urgency and justice of the Palestinian cause. In this connection active support should be extended to the UN International Conference on the Question of Palestine to be held at the end of August 1983 in Geneva. The churches should bring to bear their influence on states to participate in it;

b) to encourage the dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis with a view to furthering mutual understanding and enabling recognition;

c) to remind Christians in the Western world to recognize that their guilt over the fate of the Jews in their countries may have influenced their views of the conflict in the Middle East and has often led to uncritical support of the policies of the state of Israel, thereby ignoring the plight of the Palestinian people and their rights. In this context we welcome the more open and critical stance adopted by Christian churches in the traditional Jewish-Christian dialogue, but we also urge the broadening of the dialogue to include larger segments of both Christian and Jewish communities;

d) to support movements within Israel, which are working for peace and reconciliation.

4. Lebanon

The ecumenical community shares the agony of the peoples in Lebanon who have been tragically suffering over the last nine years and who have been carrying too large a burden of the problems of the region.

i) We reiterate that the recovery of Lebanese territorial integrity and sovereignty is a key to peace and justice in the region and that for this to be realised all foreign forces must be withdrawn from Lebanese territory.

ii) We appeal to the ecumenical community:

a) to support the efforts of the Lebanese government to reassert the effective exercise of its sovereignty over all Lebanese territory and to support full independence and unity of the Lebanese people;

b) to assist the churches within Lebanon in their attempts with leaders of the religious communities for reconciliation with a view to achieving harmony and unity among all communities in the country;

c) to continue to support generously the Middle East Council of Churches and the churches in Lebanon in their humanitarian and social programmes of relief for all in Lebanon;

d) to collaborate with the churches in the area in their contribution to the promotion of justice, dignity, freedom and human rights for all in Lebanon.

5. Jerusalem

i) We reaffirm that "Jerusalem is a Holy City for three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The tendency to minimise Jerusalem's importance for any of these three religions should be avoided" (Vth Assembly, Nairobi 1975). The WCC should implement the proposal of the WCC Central Committee (August 1980) that dialogue be initiated with Jews and Muslims so that members of the three religions can understand each other's deep religious attachment to Jerusalem and so that together they can contribute towards political processes that would lead to a mutually acceptable agreement for sharing the city. The churches should give priority to this while continuing efforts to secure a general settlement of the Middle East conflicts. The special legislation known as the Status Quo of the Holy Places must be safeguarded and confirmed in any agreement concerning Jerusalem.

ii) a) We call the attention of the churches to the need for:

- actions which will ensure a continuing indigenous Christian presence and witness in Jerusalem;
- wider ecumenical awareness of the plight of the indigenous Muslim and Christian communities suffering from the repressive actions of the occupying power in East Jerusalem and other occupied territories.

b) We call upon all churches to express their common concern that although Israeli law guarantees free access for members of all religious traditions rooted in Jerusalem to their Holy Places, the state of war between Israel and Arab states, the political reality created by the Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem and continuing occupation of the West Bank means that Arab Muslims and Christians continue to experience serious difficulties and are often prevented from visiting the Holy City.

6. We uphold the churches in the Middle East in our intercessions as they respond to the new challenges in the difficult circumstances through their witness in the service of Christ. We assure them of the solidarity of the community of faith around the world as we have gathered together here in the name of Jesus Christ, the Life of the World. We pray for the healing of the wounds in the nations of that region.

We stand together with other religious communities in a spirit of servanthood seeking to be faithful in our common calling to be peace-makers and reconcilers and to bring hope for all.

STATEMENT ON SOUTHERN AFRICA

I Preamble

1. Institutionalized racism in South Africa continues to be the central problem of justice and peace in the region, although there are several other situations in which human rights are infringed. We recall that in Nairobi (1975) the Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) declared that "racism is a sin against God and against fellow human beings. It is contrary to the justice and the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ. It destroys the human dignity of both the racist and the victim". We would wish to add that it is a denial of the fullness of life which is Christ's gift to the world, for in Him there is neither Greek nor Jew, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, but all are one. Christ on His cross tore down the barriers of hostility which keep people apart (Eph. 2:14-16), thus establishing peace.

2. Apartheid raises barriers and denies the fullness of life in Christ. Christians and the churches are called in obedience to Jesus Christ the life of the world and to maintain the integrity of the church, to oppose apartheid in all its forms, to support those who struggle against this sinful system of injustice, and to denounce any theological justification of apartheid as a heretical perversion of the gospel.

II South Africa

3. The apartheid system perpetuates white minority rule at the cost of enormous suffering. Widespread and flagrant violations continue to be an everyday part of South African life. Restriction of movement, arbitrary arrests, detention without trial, torture and death have become an institutionalized way of intimidating black people and their supporters. Although a number of banning orders have recently been lifted, several people, including some leading Christians, continue to suffer from arbitrary banning orders.

4. Furthermore, large numbers of people are experiencing ongoing forced removals and relocation in resettlement camps, often in conditions of destitution and violent government efforts to eliminate so-called "black spots" such as Driefontein as well as urban squatter areas such as Crossroads. The cost of these policies in terms of human suffering, the break up of family life and the creation of bitterness and despair is immense, and creates an extremely explosive climate.

5. In such a context a church which seeks to be the church and to proclaim the liberating gospel and the divine demand for justice cannot avoid a confrontation with the government. The church did not seek a confrontation; it prayed that it would not happen. It continues to strive to be faithful to its own calling as it summons the state to fulfil the mandate which has been given it by God.

6. In confessing the faith it is impossible in South Africa not to call for a fundamental change in the political, social and economic order of the country, not to speak for the

oppressed and defend the rights and human dignity of the powerless. As the South African Council of Churches (SACC) has said, such a confession is "a cry from the heart, something we are obliged to do for the sake of the gospel". As a consequence of the life and witness of the Christians and the churches, there is unrelenting pressure on them and the SACC, most recently shown in the activities of the Eloff Commission which appears to be an effort to muzzle and destroy the SACC.

7. Bantustan rule is in many instances as oppressive and arbitrary as that of white rule in the area, and has resulted in the proscription of churches and the systematic persecution of people. The willingness of some black leaders to accept this form of "independence" furthermore threatens to become the single most divisive and potent force militating against black solidarity and liberation in South Africa.

8. This Bantustan policy whereby blacks are being deprived of any kind of citizenship rights in other parts of South Africa and allocated to a variety of nominally independent "tribal home-lands" has been followed by further constitutional proposals affecting Asians and "coloureds". According to these, Asians and "coloureds" would have specifically limited representation in a multicameral South African legislature with Asians and "coloured" ministers of State being appointed. It is necessary to indicate, however, that these proposals do not involve any sharing of political power. This will remain securely in white hands as constitutionally entrenched. These proposals are inherently racist and emphasize separation between the races rather than integration; and underscore the fact that blacks continue to be excluded entirely from the political process. In effect, these proposals, like the Bantustan policy, reaffirm the racist principles of apartheid.

III **Namibia**

9. The remarkable courage of the Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN) in witnessing to Jesus Christ the life of the world, by standing with the oppressed, defending human rights and dignity and pressing for freedom and independence deserves wide recognition. The illegal South African occupation of the country is oppressive and generates many acts of terror against civilians. We endorse the open letter to the South African Prime Minister in January 1983 in which the Executive Committee of the CCN wrote :

> "With no regard to the rights or the will of the people of Namibia, your Administrators-General continue a regime of draconian laws, proclamations and amendments which have destructive effects upon the people. We condemn the existence of all those laws that allow for the detention of people without recourse to a court of law, and call upon your Government to charge or release all those who are detained under the so-called 'security laws', including the survivors of Carsinga who are kept in a detention camp near Mariental. Further suffering and death are caused by curfews, conscription for military service and by brutal and unprovoked attacks on innocent people. Deportations, the refusal of passports and visas and the stifling of the true situation through bannings... also arouse strong condemnation."

10. Negotiations for independence are stalled owing to obstruction by the South African government and its relentless refusal to recognize SWAPO as the legitimate representative of the Namibian people. This, together with the lethargy and apparently ineffectual influence of the western contact group, motivated by short-term political and economic interests, only contributes to the prevailing conflict. Such a situation emphasizes the need for the western contact group either to bring the South African government to the negotiation table or to disband. The insistance on linking the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola to Namibian independence is "an irrelevance" as was pointed out by the CCN. "The Cuban presence in the sovereign state of Angola", CCN stated, "is not a threat to the Namibian people." Absolute priority must be given to

both the termination of the illegal South African occupation of Namibia and Namibian independence in accordance with United Nations (UN) Resolution 435.

IV **Destabilization**

11. During the last decade South Africa, with the active collaboration of major Western powers and Israel, has been engaged in a massive military build-up which now includes nuclear weapons capability. This dangerous development poses a major threat to the peace and stability of the region. President Reagan's policy of "constructive engagement" and the recent loan of US$ 1.25 billion to South Africa on very favourable terms by the International Monetary Fund are widely interpreted as signs of increased outside support for the South African regime which is pursuing a concerted policy of an "undeclared war against its neighbours" through destabilization and aggression.

12. A large area of Angola has been under South African occupation since 1981 and there have been numerous incursions deep into Angolan territory resulting in considerable loss of life. Subversive and military attacks have taken place in Mozambique and Lesotho and there is clear evidence of attempts at destabilization in Zimbabwe. This process of destabilization is clearly intended to perpetuate white dominance in the region.

V **Recommendations**

13. The WCC Assembly, meeting in Vancouver, Canada, 24 July - 10 August 1983,

a) *reiterates* its conviction that apartheid stands condemned by the gospel of Jesus Christ the life of the world, and that any theology which supports or condones it is heretical;

b) *expresses* its admiration and support for the prophetic and courageous stand for human dignity, justice and liberation taken by the South African Council of Churches and the Council of Churches in Namibia;

c) *calls* on the member churches to intensify their witness against apartheid and continuing oppression in South Africa and Namibia, and to deepen their solidarity with those forces — including the liberation movements recognized by the UN — which oppose apartheid and racism and the struggle for liberation;

d) *condemns* Bantustan "independence" as a divisive and destructive force militating against black solidarity and liberation in South Africa;

e) *assures* the white people of South Africa that its opposition is to apartheid as a system and that it loves them as brothers and sisters made in the image of God and prays that they may seek an end to apartheid and the establishment of a just and caring society;

f) *condemns* the new constitutional proposals in South Africa as fraudulent and racist because they do not provide for the real sharing of power and exclude blacks entirely from the political process;

g) *commends* the South African Council of Churches for rejecting the new constitutional proposals and *draws* the attention of the member churches to the full implications of the racist and divisive character of this proposed legislation;

h) recognizing the necessity for a society of justice in this sub-continent and re-affirming its abhorrence of all forms of violence, *urges* the member churches to do all in their power to promote freedom of association, equality, democratic rights and the dismantling of apartheid as the essential ingredients of a political climate in which a national convention can be held;

i) *calls* for the independence of Namibia by the immediate implementation of UN Resolution 435 and *requests* the churches in the countries of the western contact group to intensify pressure on their governments to give urgent and effective supports;

j) *further deplores and condemns* attacks on neighbouring countries and efforts at destabilization by the South African government;

k) in view of the increasing number of refugees from this region, *calls* upon the member churches to use all appropriate means to render assistance to the people and also to work through existing refugee programmes;

l) *renews* its call to member churches to a disengagement from those institutions economically engaged in South Africa; *affirms* the need for mandatory and comprehensive sanctions and further urges governments which, through their fleets, are involved in transporting oil to South Africa, immediately to take steps — unilaterally or in cooperation with others to bring an effective halt to the fuelling of apartheid;

m) *calls* on churches and Christian people throughout the world to express their support for and fellowship with the oppressed people of South Africa in prayer and every other appropriate way;

n) *calls* on member churches to discourage their people from emigrating to South Africa; and

o) *supports* the ongoing process of consultation and solidarity among the churches in Africa, in cooperation with the All Africa Conference of Churches in their witness and struggle for liberation against apartheid and its consequences.

STATEMENT ON CENTRAL AMERICA

1. Promising signs of life are appearing within Central America. They are like a young plant striving to rise from the earth, yearning to grow and to be a blessing for the world. Thus, Jesus Christ the life of the world teaches us, his disciples, that life must be nourished and defended against the powers of death and of oppression which oppose it.

> God remembers those who suffer
> He does not forget their cry
> And he punishes those who wrong them
> The needy will not always be neglected
> The hope of the poor will not be crushed forever
> (Psalm 9:12-18)

2. Central America is caught up in an agonizing struggle to recast the foundations of its peoples' life. The struggle of life confronting death is a daily one. The depth of this struggle — political, economic, ideological, social, cultural, spiritual — is of historic proportions. Grounded in a common history of harsh colonialism, of exploitation of the poor and of the concentration of power and wealth, countries in the region are, in different ways, under siege.

3. The current United States administration, acting on its perception of the nation's security, has adopted a policy of military, economic, financial and political initiatives designed to destabilize the Nicaraguan government, provide renewed international support for Guatemala's violent military regimes, resist the forces of historic change in El Salvador, and militarize Honduras in order to insure a base from which to contain the aspirations of the Central American peoples. This policy is publicly articulated as a framework within which objectives of peace, reform, economic development and democracy can be achieved and communism and "export of revolution" prevented.

4. Indeed the opposite prevails : fear and tensions are heightened; scarce resources needed to meet basic human needs are diverted; the chances of war, potentially devastating to Central America and the Caribbean, escalate; and, in the long-term, the legitimate interests and security of the nations and peoples of the American hemisphere are threatened. There can be no security in the rgion without fidelity to the persistent, yearning struggle of the Central American peoples for peace with justice.

5. International price declines in the region's key export crops have severely strained the region's economies further exacerbating political, economic and social tensions. Adding to these economic problems, the United States administration has successfully harnessed international financial institutions to its Central American strategy.

6. In this context, the churches, endeavouring to respond to the needs of the region's suffering population, are also having to face the divisive effects of an aggressive new wave of mainly US-based and financed religious groups. They are a source of great concern to the churches, particularly as these groups appear, in their churches' analysis to be used for political purposes in legitimizing policies of repression.

7. Guatemala in the past year has witnessed massacres of civilian non-combattant populations, a large number of extrajudicial executions and the extermination of thousands of people among the Indian population in ways which defy belief. Despite the magnitude of economic, political and military resources provided to the regime by the United States, the El Salvadoran government has demonstrated an inability to curb human rights violations and implement needed reform. The Legal Aid Christian Service, of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of San Salvador, reports a number of over 2,000 civilians and non-combattants who have been executed outside the law during the period running from January to April of this year, by members of the armed forces, by paramilitary organizations and by death squads for political reasons. The policies of the Honduran government threaten the territorial sovereignty of Nicaragua and cause considerable harassment to refugees from El Salvador. Churches report severe human rights violations committed by intelligence and security forces. Other countries — such as Belize, Costa Rica and Panama — have been the object of pressures brought to bear upon them so as to affect events within Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua.

8. Refugees, displaced persons and divided families are a powerful testimony to the bloodshed and terror perpetrated on the poorest of the region's people. Approximately 500,000 human beings have been forced to flee their country and one million more have been displaced from their homes in Guatemala alone. El Salvadoran refugees in Honduras and Guatemalan refugees in southern Mexico continue to be vulnerable to incursions by military forces into camps.

9. In the context of the theme of the Sixth Assembly, "Jesus Christ, the Life of the World", and given the escalation of aggressive acts against Nicaragua, we lift up our concern for the people of the entire region by drawing attention to the life-affirming achievements of the Nicaraguan peoples and its leadership since 1979. Noteworthy was the decision of the government to abolish the death penalty and to release several thousand members of Somoza's National Guard. In addition, an internationally-acclaimed literacy programme, the eradication of poliomyelitus and reduction of

malaria, an effective land reform scheme and significant progress in constitutional development preparatory to holding elections in 1985 have helped to give concrete expression to the region's aspirations. The government has demonstrated its openness in acknowledging the inappropriateness of some policies related to the Miskito Indian and other ethnic groups of the Atlantic Coast, and is moving towards reconciliation. It is also important to note that the Nicaraguan process has involved the full participation of Christians, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, at every level of reconstruction and nation-building.

10. This life-affirming process is having to confront death on a daily basis. The United States-financed former National Guard, now based in Honduras, have thus far claimed 700 lives, mainly Nicaraguan young people who are members of the volunteer militia. Tensions with Honduras have escalated dangerously. Nicaragua's call for bilateral talks with Honduras has failed. In the interests of peace, Nicaragua has now indicated its willingness to enter multilateral talks. However, United States support for the former National Guardsmen continues and the Reagan administration, pleading peace and dialogue, takes steps to assemble weaponry and support troops in Honduras and to deploy naval vessels off both Nicaraguan coasts.

11. Nicaragua's destabilization is an affront to life and is fully capable of plunging not only the countries of Central America but also those of the Caribbean into deeper suffering and widespread loss of life. It undercuts the legitimate call and struggle of the poor throughout the region for an end to exploitation and for an opportunity to determine their own path on the difficult pilgrimage of those who seek to enjoy life in all its fullness.

12. The Sixth Assembly affirms the right of the Central American peoples to seek and to nourish life in all its dimensions. It therefore:

i. Expresses to the Central American churches the profound concern and solidarity of the worldwide ecumenical community, as Christian sisters and brothers experience and respond to the critical threats to life, reiterating its strong commitment to the churches' witness, ministries and presence. It commends the Nicaraguan Christian community for its active participation in the building up of national institutions and reconciliatory processes leading to peace with justice.

ii. Vigorously opposes any type of military intervention by the United States, covert or overt, or by any other government, in the Central American region. The Assembly commends the churches in the United States for their prophetic expressions of the condemnation of such intervention, and calls upon them to intensify their efforts to press for a radical change of US policy in the region. It urges member churches in other countries to make strong representations to their governments so as to press the United States administration to reverse its military policies, as a positive step towards the building of peace in the region.

iii. Calls upon the new government of Guatemala to reverse the policies of repression by which large numbers of its population have been exterminated and to take immediate steps to restore respect for human rights.

iv. Urges the government of El Salvador to enter into a fruitful process of dialogue with representatives of its political and military opposition, so as to bring long lasting peace to the country.

v. Calls upon the churches and the ecumenical community to throw their full weight into supporting peace initiatives, such as that of the "Contadora" group of Latin American states.

vi. Encourages the churches in Central America to redouble their efforts to gather and communicate, to the worldwide ecumenical community and other international constituencies, information on the developing critical situation affecting the region, as long as it is necessary.

vii. Affirms and encourages the process of reconciliation among Nicaraguan minorities and the Spanish-speaking majority and urges the Nicaraguan government to maintain its openness and commitment to increasing the sensitivity of its policy and practice in this area.

RESOLUTION ON AFGHANISTAN

The Sixth Assembly recalls the concern regarding the Afghan situation expressed in earlier statements by the World Council of Churches.

We note that the continuing fighting there has led to tremendous suffering of vast sections of the population many of whom have become refugees. The UN estimates that there are more than three million Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran.

We note initiatives, including that of the non-aligned movement, for peaceful resolution of the conflict. We welcome especially the initiatives taken by the Secretary General of the United Nations for resolving the conflict, summarized as follows:

- an end to the supply of arms to the opposition groups from outside;
- creation of a favourable climate for the return of the refugees;
- guarantee of the settlement by the USSR, the USA, People's Republic of China, and Pakistan;
- withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan in the context of an overall political settlement, including agreement between Afghanistan and the USSR.

We support the Secretary General's current efforts and hope that the negotiations among the parties concerned will lead to a comprehensive settlement.

We believe that this would enable the Afghan people to follow freely their own path of development and to progress towards a more just society. We also believe that such an agreement would reduce tension in the region and also contribute to improvement of relations between the USA and USSR and of international relations in general.

Meanwhile, the WCC should continue to provide humanitarian assistance to the Afghan refugees.

RESOLUTION ON CYPRUS

The Sixth Assembly recalls the statements and actions of the World Council of Churches since 1974 related to the situation in Cyprus created by the military intervention by Turkish forces. The Assembly is deeply concerned about the lack of progress towards a peaceful and just solution of the question of Cyprus.

The Assembly reaffirms the calls already made by the World Council of Churches:

- for immediate implementation of all relevant United Nations resolutions on Cyprus;

- for immediate resumption in a meaningful and constructive manner of the negotiations between the representatives of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities under the auspices of the Secretary General of the United Nations, to be conducted freely and on the basis of equality, with a view to reaching a mutually acceptable agreement ensuring their fundamental and legitimate rights;

- for due respect for religious and sacred places.

The Assembly asks the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches and its Commission of the Churches on International Affairs to pursue further the question of missing Cypriots in cooperation with member churches especially in Western Europe and North America and with appropriate inter-governmental and international bodies.

RESOLUTION ON THE PACIFIC

The WCC Sixth Assembly has heard the personal and collective testimonies emanating from the inspiring life and witness of Christians and churches in the South Pacific. We give thanks to God for this witness and express our solidarity with the pastoral and prophetic role which the churches of the Pacific and the Pacific Conference of Churches have been playing with regard to a number of urgent problems affecting the present and future Pacific societies:

- the continued nuclear weapons testing in French Polynesia, the effects of radiation on the health and environment of present and future generations in the Marshall Islands;

- dumping of nuclear wastes by outside powers;

- military, notably naval, manoeuvres undertaken by the great powers, which include nuclear weapons-carrying submarines, and which reinforce the militarization of the region;

- threats to the indigenous Pacific cultural identities through colonial and neo-colonial structures involving transnational corporations, foreign media and tourism;

- persistence of foreign domination in French Polynesia and Micronesia;

- the as yet unresolved problem of the self-determination and independence of the Melanesian people of New Caledonia.

The Assembly urges the member churches to strengthen their support for and solidarity with the Christians and churches of the Pacific in their struggles for political and economic independence and for a nuclear free Pacific, by concrete educational and advocacy activities, combined with a pastoral approach involving prayers and intercessions. It is recommended that the WCC programmes involving the Pacific be intensified.

RESOLUTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLES OF CANADA

The World Council of Churches' Central Committee (August 1982) has called upon the member churches "to listen to and learn from indigenous people in order to deepen Christian understanding of (and solidarity with) their legal rights, their political situation, their cultural achievements and aspirations, and their spiritual convictions".

At this Sixth Assembly in Vancouver, BC, Canada, we have been privileged to hear personal testimonies from and to share experiences with Aboriginal peoples of Canada. We give thanks to God for this witness and for the consistent support of the Canadian churches for these peoples' struggles to:

- gain recognition within Canada as distinct peoples uniquely attached to their traditional lands; and

- assert and gain respect for their human rights, including especially their fundamental rights to their land.

The Assembly expresses its solidarity with those struggles and in the light of the First Ministers Conference on the Canadian Constitution on aboriginal rights, title and treaty rights, urges the Federal and Provincial Governments of Canada to recognize and enact aboriginal title, aboriginal rights and treaty rights in the Canadian Constitution in a manner and form acceptable to the Aboriginal peoples themselves. We further urge these governments to make no amendment or alteration to aboriginal and treaty rights without the consent of the affected peoples.

The Assembly appeals to the member churches to support the Aboriginal peoples of Canada and the Canadian churches as they seek to achieve these ends; and requests the General Secretary to communicate this resolution to the appropriate governments and the Working Group on Indigenous Populations of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

MINUTE ON THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

During this Assembly's discussion of violations of human rights our attention has been drawn to the historical reality and present threat of genocide to some peoples. Far too often these occurrences are passed over in silence. In certain current instances this is being used by groups to justify wholly unacceptable acts of violence.

In this context we have been reminded once again of the tragic massacre of one-and-a-half million Armenians in Turkey and the deportation of another half-million from this historic homeland at the beginning of this century. The silence of the world community and deliberate efforts to deny even historical facts have been consistent sources of anguish and growing despair to the Armenian people, the Armenian churches and many others.

The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches has raised this concern in the United Nations Commission on Human Rights with reference to the latter's study of the Question of Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

The Assembly requests the General Secretary to provide information to the churches on this and to continue to pursue the matter in appropriate contexts. Public recognition of those events is essential in order that they do not continue to engender violent acts of retribution, and that through remembering this history of the Armenian people other peoples might be spared a similar fate.

MINUTE ON UNITED STATES MILITARY BASES IN THE PHILIPPINES

In its discussions on peace and justice, the Assembly has drawn attention to the misuse of the concept of national security to justify repression and foreign intervention in denial of the sovereignty and legitimate security interests of other peoples. It has called for a halt to the rapidly growing deployment of nuclear weapons and support systems in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

Our attention has been drawn to the negative effects of the continuation of US military bases in the Philippines. The presence of these foreign conventional and nuclear forces poses threats to the sovereignty, security and human rights of the Filipino people. These threats have been frequently discussed in WCC consultations since the last Assembly and detailed information about them has been provided to the churches.

The Assembly requests the General Secretary, particularly through the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, to keep this concern under constant review, and to recommend to the churches appropriate actions in support of the churches in the Philippines and the efforts of the Filipino people for the withdrawal of the bases and in their continuing struggles for human rights and against the militarization of their society. The WCC should also support the US churches in their efforts for changes in the policies of the USA as they affect the Philippines.

MINUTE ON THE SITUATION IN SRI LANKA

During the first week of the Assembly, we received the news about the violence in Sri Lanka which resulted in the death of many and which made thousands homeless. The Officers of the Council sent cables to the President of Sri Lanka and the churches there expressing profound concern. They assured the churches and all the people of Sri Lanka of the prayers of the Assembly.

There have been earlier actions by the WCC protesting against the Prevention of Terrorism Act and other legislative enactments and criticising the violation of human rights in Sri Lanka.

The WCC has now received first-hand information on the situation there. The Assembly commends the churches in Sri Lanka for their praise-worthy efforts in relief and rehabilitation and for their ministry of reconciliation under difficult circumstances.

It asks the General Secretary :

a) to intensify efforts through CICARWS to assist the churches in their programmes of relief and rehabilitation;

b) to give priority through the programmes of PCR and CCIA to the underlying racial conflicts and the violation of human rights especially as they affect the Tamil community, and to assist processes that will lead to a cessation of the violence and a political settlement;

c) to provide information and analysis of the situation in Sri Lanka to member churches.

MINUTE ON THE SITUATION IN LESOTHO

In the recent period there has been a disturbing increase in the violation of human rights in Lesotho, with arbitrary arrests, detentions, torture and even political killings.

Responding to the demands of the gospel, the Lesotho Evangelical Church has witnessed boldly in defense of justice and human rights for all people in the country. This has created considerable difficulties for the church and many of its members had to pay a heavy price for their service to God and people.

The Assembly requests the General Secretary to extend all possible support to the Lesotho Evangelical Church in its ministry especially in the area of human rights and to disseminate information among member churches on the situation there.

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 1983

from Dr Philip A. Potter, General Secretary of the WCC:

Once again we celebrate God's gift of life in Jesus born of Mary. Once again we do so when life is threatened, denied and destroyed. Is this celebration a mockery? Is it in vain?

Over seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus, the prophet Isaiah described the invasion of Israel by the ruthless Assyrian empire. The boots of trampling soldiers were heard and felt, says Isaiah, and garments soaked with blood were seen. Darkness and death spread over the land. Yet the prophet declared: "For us a child is born; to us a son is given" (9 : 1-7). This child of hope was the symbol that God still reigned and would manifest his marvellous light as the wonderful consultor, mighty God, the ever-present father, the prince of peace in justice.

Now as then, darkness and death come upon us when human counsel falters and fails on the stumbling block of false security, rather than relying on the counsel of good which God has willed. Now as then, power and might are seen in terms of oppression and conquest, rather than as a means of building together a community of sharing. Now as then, the world is a breeding ground for tyranny, fear and indifference, rather than a home where father, mother, children and all people are bound together by ties of love and mutual care. Now as then, peace is perceived as a condition imposed by force or as a balance of terror, rather than as the fruit of a common security in freedom and justice.

And yet, the promise of God through Isaiah is deeply imprinted on the human consciousness. Despite oppression and war, tyranny and injustice, selfishness and insecurity, a child is born, a son or daughter is given at every moment somewhere on the earth. God's image is made alive ever anew. The grace of counsel, might, fatherhood and motherhood, peace and justice is given afresh. Millions of people give birth to children in hope of a better life for tomorrow. Yet millions, too, are afraid to bear children because of insecurity and despair about the survival of humankind. Millions see their children die of disease, starvation and war.

But between the time of Isaiah's prophecy and our own troubled times, a child was born in Bethlehem, a son was given to the human race. God's purpose and being was revealed in this child, Jesus, that we may know what it means to be made in his image for good. When this child was presented to be blessed, the old priest Simeon said to his mother: "Behold, this child is set for the falling and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts will be revealed" (Luke 2 : 34-35).

Indeed, it was Jesus who in our human flesh revealed our true condition as those who live in darkness and death. This he did by offering in himself and in his word and acts the light and life of God in love. His offering was also a judgment on those who, in their evil counsel, destroying might, tyranny and war, imposed on him the darkness of death. But God, the almighty Father, in his good counsel brought him to life again and through him made peace on earth a reality for those who accept his offer.

In this season of Christmas we are called to be born anew in this child, Jesus, crucified and risen for us. Once again, we are invited to become like little children and present ourselves for his blessing that we may in faithful integrity partake of his power of good, his fatherly and motherly love, his peace and justice.

That was the experience of those who participated in the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver this year. At the opening service, people from different nations and cultures brought their gifts to the altar. The last gift was from Zimbabwe — a country so long torn by racial strife and war — from a mother who offered her little child. This offering and the deep emotion it evoked were a sign of our confession that Jesus Christ is indeed the life of the world.

The message from the Assembly mentions this act of offering and says: "It was a sign of hope and of continuity of life. Sometimes we are almost overcome by the smallness and insignificance of our lives; then we feel helpless. But as we feed upon the bread of life in worship we know again and again God's saving act in Christ in our own lives. We are astounded and surprised that the eternal purpose of God is persistently entrusted to ordinary people. That is the risk God takes. The forces of death are strong. The gift of life in Christ is stronger. We commit ourselves to live that life, with all its risks and joys, and therefore dare to cry, with all the host of heaven. 'O death, where is your victory?' Christ is risen. He is risen indeed."

In Christ born for us and given to us, crucified and risen for us, we too are born by faith and given to the world this Christmastide for a life together in freedom, peace and justice.

WCC-MECC STATEMENT ON LEBANON CRISIS

With a rapidly deteriorating situation in Lebanon, a joint statement was published on 13 September 1983 by the General Secretaries of the World Council of Churches and the Middle East Council of Churches, Philip Potter and Gabriel Habib. The following is the text:

"The tragic events of the past few days in Lebanon cause us profound concern. A renewed vicious cycle of violence has already claimed the lives of hundreds of innocent people. Villages are besieged and humanitarian assistance to thousands of displaced persons has been made difficult. Hopes of recovering the integrity and unity of Lebanon are being destroyed as the sectarian fighting leads to fragmentation of the country, making it more vulnerable to foreign intervention and domination.

"Deeply saddened by these events, we appeal fervently to all concerned to stop the fighting immediately and to enter into negotiations with a view to recovering communal harmony and national reconciliation. We also insistently appeal to all those involved in the fighting forthwith to refrain from any killing of innocent people and spare the lives of the civilian population which should not be made the object of reprisals or used as hostages. Neither human conscience nor any religious tradition can tolerate or condone the massacres. They are an offence to God, the Giver of Life. All facilities should be given to ensure humanitarian assistance to the injured and afflicted people.

"The peoples in Lebanon have been tragically suffering over the last nine years. In spite of that, Lebanon continues for us to be a country with unique opportunities for the living together of various religious communities in equality and a key for peace for the whole area.

"We want to assure the people of Lebanon once again that the ecumenical community upholds them in prayers, that it is as always ready to render all possible humanitarian assistance and to work with them for reconciliation with a view to achieving harmony and unity among all communities in the country."

WCC CABLE TO FASTERS FOR LIFE

As eleven fasters for life were in their sixth week of fasting for a nuclear freeze (mid-September 1983) in Paris, Oakland (California) and Bonn, and had entered a critical phase, WCC General Secretary Philip Potter sent the following cable to the three groups of fasters. The message was delivered by personal representatives of the WCC in those places:

"As you enter the 39th day in your now critical Fast for Life, I send this message and this plea in the name of life.

"First, I want to express my profound respect and commendation for your remarkable life-affirming action. The testimonies I hear from many thousands around the world, not least among the membership of our churches, is that your witness has been heard.

"Your fasting has fed the solidarity of all who hunger for disarmament. In your weakness you have made us strong. All who share your struggle for life are now a little less afraid to face the forces of death.

"Be heartened by what you have done, against impossible odds. The expressions of concern and support from eminent people, the networks and groups that have formed, the actions taken and the prayers offered worldwide — all these fruits of your fast have made incalculable advances for peace and justice. Incalculable, because it is God who decides whether our advances add up to a victory, and who reverses our failures by his grace.

"At its Sixth Assembly in Vancouver, meeting as you began your fast, the World Council of Churches joined its voice with yours in the cry for life. Not only by celebrating the theme 'Jesus Christ — the Life of the World', but specifically through a statement on peace and justice that includes the very steps your fast affirms.

"At Vancouver, we called for 'a negotiated settlement and to turn away now, before it is too late, from plans to deploy additional or new nuclear weapons in Europe, and to begin immediately to reduce and then eliminate altogether present nuclear forces... and an unequivocal declaration that the production and deployment as well as the use of nuclear weapons are crimes against humanity...'.

"It was your witness, and that of thousands of other actions for disarmament that has encouraged the representatives of the member churches of the World Council to commit themselves further in this way.

"But more important, and needed now is your ongoing presence and encouragement in the actions that must fill the months to come. We are committed to sharing with you that struggle for life.

"My plea is that you continue that struggle with us by ending your fast now. To finish your witness for life by death is to risk deepening the discouragement and despair among precisely those for whom your witness brings new hope.

"Your action has been costly enough. By ending your fast you would speak even more eloquently of life."

CHURCH RECOMMENDATIONS ON NICARAGUA

The following are among the recommendations to the World Council of Churches and its member churches by a WCC delegation which spent six days this month in Nicaragua in September 1983. Besides meetings with Nicaraguan government and church representatives, the delegation spent time with Roberto Cardenal, secretary of the editorial council of the opposition newspaper La Prensa, *and Anthony Quainton, US ambassador to Nicaragua.*

A. Give immediate, tangible and visible support to the work of the churches in the United States, as they mobilize effective opposition to the present policies of their government towards Central America.

B. Press governments for a negotiated political solution to the crisis in Nicaragua and Central America, while opposing United States military support to repressive and destabilizing governments and forces in the region, particularly through Honduras and Costa Rica.

C. Encourage governments to increase state aid credit to the Nicaraguan government for its social, economic and cultural programmes and projects, work for a resumption of significant international financial loans to Nicaragua and for an increase of private trade and activity, while urging the churches and their agencies to increase financial grants for ecumenically sponsored and supported projects benefitting the population.

D. Throw every effort into the current peace initiatives being undertaken by Latin American states to reach agreement, through dialogue, on a stable and lasting peace based on legitimate national interests and justice concerns in the Central America region.

E. Initiate and strengthen major efforts in the area of providing and disseminating information about Nicaragua, giving priority to the media and its potential ability to influence political and public opinion worldwide, and to the Nicaraguan churches' proven competence in proving correct and objective data and interpretation, with integrity, on the situation.

F. In the light of the pervasive and clear participation of Christians in the past and the present defence of liberation in Nicaragua, churches worldwide are invited to learn from the unique experience being lived by their Nicaraguan sisters and brothers in the Christian communities. Particular attention should be given to the spirituality of struggle, the ecumenical cooperation at community levels and the fresh articulation of the theological and biblical roots of Christian participation in the transformation of society. Churches and Christians are urged to visit Nicaragua and to share their insights and experience with their parishes and congregations worldwide.

G. Express to the churches in Nicaragua full support for their witness in their difficult tasks of reconstruction under great stress and obstacles, as well as in their efforts for peace, not only in the region, but also in the reconciliation among social sectors of Nicaraguan societies and among Roman Catholic and evangelical churches.

H. Seek and send material, human and financial resources for programmes of humanitarian assistance carried out among refugees and other sectors of the populations affected by repressive regimes of the Central American region. Particular attention should be given to the needs arising from the constant attacks on the lives, and economic activities of the populations living in the border areas of Nicaragua.

Ecumenical Diary

Church visitors report on Nicaraguan situation

An eight-person delegation sent by the WCC Sixth Assembly on a pastoral and fact-finding visit has concluded that "Nicaragua is the scene of many encouraging developments, even in the midst of enormous difficulties", many of which are "precipitated by external aggression".

The assembly delegation was in the Central American nation 4-9 September 1983 at the invitation of the Baptist Convention, Moravian Church, and CEPAD, an ecumenical development commission made up of representatives of 37 Nicaraguan church groups. The group's three-part report includes reflections on the current national situation, a review of the Nicaraguan church situation, and a series of recommendations to the WCC.

The group also reports that "several direct and indirect attempts to meet with Roman Catholic Archbishop Miguel Obando y Bravo, or other official spokes-persons of the Nicaraguan Roman Catholic hierarchy... were unsuccessful". The hierarchy and the Sandinista government, which assumed power in 1979 following a long revolutionary struggle, have been at odds about national policy, though other parts of the numerically dominant Roman Catholic church are energetic supporters of Sandinista rule.

The delegation's report calls Nicaragua a "nation under severe military attack" with widespread "military aggression... amply supported by the government of the United States". It says a deliberate policy of "diversified dependency" has led to "considerable assistance" from the USSR and Cuba, "as well as from many other countries of the world, socialist, Western, and non-aligned". The group says it knows of "no evidence that would indicate" that aid has been used by Nicaragua to support aggression against its neighbours. — EPS

Timetable announced for new WCC General Secretary

A timetable for the search for a new General Secretary of the WCC was announced in Geneva, 23 September 1983, by Lois Wilson, one of the seven newly elected WCC presidents and moderator of the preparatory committee charged with proposing a search process. Wilson said she would consult with the WCC officers the following month about appropriate ways to inform the member churches and to proceed further with the steps required to allow the Central Committee to name a General Secretary at its meeting in July 1984.

The 10-member preparatory committee already nominated from the Executive Committee's membership during its first meeting in August in Vancouver meets in Geneva in January 1984 to draft criteria and clear procedures for interviewing and selection. These are to be received by the Executive Committee in February, and forwarded to the official nominating committee. Following these guidelines, the nominating committee is expected to meet in April and again in early July to finalize nominations, interview candidates and bring their recommendations to the Central Committee for decision. — EPS

Restoration of death penalty defeated

Attempts to restore the death penalty in Britain were thrown out for the foreseeable future by a decisive parliamentary vote in July 1983. While a major factor in this was undoubtedly the opposition to hanging by experts concerned with the administration of justice, equally striking has been the virtual unanimity of the British churches in condemning any move to bring back capital punishment.

Capital punishment was abolished in Britain in 1969 after having been initially suspended as a five-year experiment. In 1957 Parliament introduced a distinction between capital and non-capital murder with the death penalty applying only to the former.

The Church of England's general synod voted by the overwhelming majority of 407 to 36 with 10 abstentions to deplore the reintroduction of capital punishment into the United Kingdom's sentencing policy. Its vote came just the day before the House of Commons' debate. The Roman Catholic bishops' conference unanimously opposed the reintroduction of the death penalty. They expressed their belief that this would be damaging and dehumanizing to the whole of society and said they were not convinced that legalized killing had been shown to be an effective means of controlling violence.

The General Secretary of the British Council of Churches Philip Morgan wrote to all members of Parliament at the executive committee's request to express the BCC's total opposition to the reintroduction of the death penalty. "The judicial taking of life as a penalty for murder does not enhance the sacredness of human life but further devalues it," he wrote.

The Methodist Conference voted by 600 to 4 to urge MPs to resist any call for the reintroduction of capital punishment, which it called "totally unacceptable in a humane society". The executive of the United Reformed Church — whose general assembly had met before the Conservative Party's landslide win in the June general election made the return of the death penalty a credible possibility — firmly endorsed the British Council of Churches' stand. — EPS

1983 Special Fund racism grants

Forty-three groups in 18 countries on six continents shared US$446,000 in grants in 1983, as allocated from the Special Fund of the WCC's Programme to Combat Racism (PCR). More than half of the money went to four southern African organizations, all of which have received PCR grants in the past.

The African National Congress (ANC) got US$70,000 "for medical care, agricultural, educational and legal services for its people now living in frontline states". Amidst increasing internal support for the ANC during the past two years, South African governmental pressure against its supporters has grown equally, resulting in an increased refugee population from South Africa. The Pan African Congress of Azania got US$50,000 for news and information services counteracting South African propaganda, and for legal aid towards the trials of some of its prominent members. The third and largest grant, US$105,000, was to the South West Africa People's Organization [SWAPO], recognized as the sole representative of the Namibian people by the international community. Endorsed by the All Africa Conference of Churches and the Organization for African Unity, SWAPO asked for financial assistance to provide legal aid, humanitarian aid, assistance to families and dependents of those who have lost their lives, or who have been arrested, imprisoned, detained or disappeared. The fourth grant, US$10,000, went to the South African Congress of Trade Unions to assist black workers in obtaining their lawful union rights. While this last organization was not on the 1982 list of grants, the three others each received an increase of US$5,000 over last year's allocations.

Special Fund grants were adopted by the WCC's Central Committee in 1969 as a measure to help organizations actively engaged in combating racism in its various forms. Since 1970 US$5,710,500 has been allocated by the Fund. Among the criteria governing the grants are that "the purpose of the organizations must not be in conflict with the general purpose of the WCC" and that the grants are made "without control of the manner in which they are spent, and are extended as an expression of commitment by the WCC to the cause of economic, social and political justice which these organizations promote".

Grants from the Fund are covered by designated contributions from WCC member denominations, local congregations, councils of churches, missions, ecumenical groups, individuals and the governments of Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands and Bermuda. At the WCC Sixth Assembly held in Vancouver, Canada, in 1983, delegates from member churches offered their continued support to the PCR and its pattern of grant distribution to racially oppressed peoples.

The remainder of the 1983 grants were distributed by continent as follows (all figures are in US dollars): Asia, one group, 11,500; Australia, four, 30,000; Europe, six, 30,000; Latin America, three, 23,000; North America, six, 40,000. A total of 19 support groups scattered throughout twelve countries received US$76,500. Except for two groups, the French Anti-Apartheid Movement (US$3,500) and the Patrice Lumumba Coalition in the USA (US$2,000), all had benefited from grants in the past.

All four Australian organizations are first-time receivers of Special Grant funds, to benefit Aboriginal peoples, and two of them are women's groups. — EPS

WCC message to NCC in Korea

Prior to memorial services for the victims of the Korean airline tragedy on 1 September 1983, the WCC sent the following message to the Korean churches, via the General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in Korea:

"The World Council of Churches expresses its shock at the destruction of a Korean airliner and the tragic loss of 269 lives during the flight from New York to Seoul on 1 September. We are appalled at the blatent violation and abuse of basic accepted international agreements guaranteeing safety of civilian air traffic.

"This tragedy demonstrates the disastrous human consequences produced by national policies of confrontation and the urgent need to reduce tension in the North East Asia region.

"We associate ourselves with demands for an independent international investigation by competent bodies in order to bring to light all the facts and the consequences to be drawn from them by the international community.

"Please convey to the bereaved our condolences and to the member churches and through them to the people of Korea our profound distress. Be assured of our continuing support and prayers." — EPS

Orthodox weigh role in US church council

As the US National Council of Churches is attempting to reassess its role and way of operating, participation of its Orthodox members has become a special issue. Theologian John Meyendorff of the (predominantly Russian) Orthodox Church in America recently wrote in the OCA's *Orthodox Church* that the NCC "does not offer, at present, a satisfactory forum for a meaningful witness of the Orthodox minority". He recommended that the Orthodox, like the Roman Catholics, limit their NCC activity to the Faith and Order Commission. Rastko Trbuhovich, a Serbian priest serving as consultant to the Faith and Order Commission, argued in an interview that Meyendorff's suggestion was "regressive". "But it is a symptom of Orthodox ambivalence towards the Council," he said.

The Orthodox contend that Protestants of the NCC make little effort to understand their viewpoint. "We Orthodox know something about Protestants, but we feel they understand us far less," Trbuhovich said. The Orthodox thought more time at NCC meetings should be spent getting to know each other, and that the NCC might take affirmative action to employ Orthodox staff members. Trbuhovich pointed out that the NCC, whose 31 members include nine Orthodox bodies, had never had a full-time Orthodox staff member. — EPS

Interfaith couples' communion plea

An urgent plea to the Roman Catholic bishops of England and Wales to allow a non-Catholic husband or wife to receive communion in certain circumstances comes in a book published in the UK in autumn 1983. Entitled *Sharing Communion*, it is a survey of 80 marriages between members of different denominations carried out by the Association of Interchurch Families. Couples with a high degree of church commitment, the book shows, find it particularly distressing to be separated at the eucharist, especially on major occasions such as their own wedding and their children's first communion and confirmation.

Other churches are normally happy to welcome Roman Catholics to communion, except in certain cases where Anglican clergy do not wish to jeopardize the good relations they have built up with their Catholic colleagues. Official Vatican policy, however, has always been against such intercommunion. In 1980 the Roman Catholic bishops of England and Wales turned down the request of the National Pastoral Congress for non-Catholic spouses to be admitted to communion on major occasions. Their reason was that communion, as the symbol of unity, could not be used as a means of achieving it. *Sharing Communion* makes clear nonetheless that this situation is gradually changing. More interchurch couples are receiving communion together in each other's churches, either without having asked for official permission, or after permission has been granted.

In the book's conclusions, pioneer Catholic ecumenist Father John Coventry, SJ, argues that intercommunion "may not be used indiscriminately for the restoration of unity, (but) may be used with discrimination". He describes interchurch families as "a small qualitative force for unity, already living a measure of unity well beyond that which their churches enjoy". — EPS

Divorcees can marry in church says synod

At its five-day meeting at York, 11-15 July 1983, the general synod of the Church of England approved proposals to allow the marriage in church of divorced persons during the lifetime of a former spouse. By a comfortable majority the synod approved a procedure for the marriage in church of divorced people. In each case the bishop would decide whether or not to grant a dispensation after receiving an application from the couple's parish priest and referring the case to an inter-diocesan panel of advisers.

In discussion on church unity, the general synod gave a warm welcome to both the final report of the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission and the Lima report on baptism, eucharist and ministry drawn up by the World Council of Churches. The two documents were being given consideration in advance of detailed debate in 1985 and 1986 to enable the Church of England to give formal responses to the Anglican Consultative Council and to the WCC respectively.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie, underlined the importance of linking the two documents. "By holding the two discussions together at this stage, we are saying to our Roman Catholic friends that we want to bring the protestant traditions with us in our dialogue with Rome," he said. It would demonstrate to the British Free Churches that "we are looking for wider unity than these islands alone". — EPS

Africa's search for peace

The first All Africa Assembly of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) took place in Nairobi, Kenya, 30 August-3 September 1983. The WCRP, with headquarters in New York, originated some 15 years ago as a joint effort by leaders of various world religions to prevent war and social and economic injustices.

The Nairobi assembly, attended by 180 delegates representing various religions from all over Africa and other parts of the world, had as its theme: "Religion for Peace in Emerging Africa". Delegates expressed hope that, with determination and sensitivity, Africa can rise above the many difficulties which have brought havoc among its peoples, destroying hopes for the future which were raised after attaining independence. They also noted that Africa was faced with problems including tribalism, apartheid, ideological and religious dogmatism, military dictatorships, poverty, unemployment and a rising number of refugees.

The assembly further noted with sorrow that increasing portions of national resources in many African countries were channelled into military spending, with the result that there was less available for the needs of the people, many of whom were being impoverished. It called on the superpowers and other arms suppliers to stop unnecessary arms supplies to Africa, and especially South Africa. — EPS

WCC mission staff adds Maryknoll nun

The WCC and the Vatican announced on 7 October 1983 the appointment of Maryknoll Sister Joan Delaney to a three-year term as a "temporary consultant to assist in... Catholic relationships" with the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. The appointment, effective January 1984, is by the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity in collaboration with the Vatican Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. The official announcement said Delaney will work "closely" with the Secretariat and the Congregation, and with the Rome-based International Union of Superiors General "in the general context" of WCC-RC relations, a major expression of which is a WCC-RC Joint Working Group.

An American, Delaney has most recently been coordinator of the Overseas Missionary Research Programme at the Centre for Applied Research in the Apostolate in Washington. She worked for 19 years in Hong Kong. Among her new staff colleagues is CWME Deputy Director Ion Bria, who is secretary for Orthodox studies and relationships. — EPS

Book Review

Bénédiction — le sourire de Dieu, *by* Christianne Méroz. *Lausanne, Switzerland: Editions Ouverture and Presses Bibliques Universitaires, 1983, 135 pp.*

"God's blessing... transforms our attitude, which is so easily judgmental, into one of communion, friendship and love... (It) finds its truest expression, perhaps, in solidarity" (p. 102).

It is tempting to describe this book as a modern treatise on the blessing of God, which brings the findings of serious scholarship within the reach of the wider public. In addition, however, the author offers "a contemplative rather than a strictly exegetical interpretation" (p. 47), for "theology is essentially mystical or it is not theology at all" (p. 107). "It is only when we do theology as pilgrims that we do it well" (pp. 112f.). Indeed, what we are invited to undertake here is a journey, that of love incarnate in the world.

Making abundant use of the Jewish literature of spiritual counsel, Christianne Méroz enables us to discover refreshingly new insights: "What a mystery is the calling of Judas, perhaps the only one of the disciples to have loved his master even to the point of laying down his life for him! ... Like his master, he dies alone, rejected by his own" (p. 69). Or, again, this interpretation of the crossing of the Sea of Reeds: "The suffering of God, weeping over the death of his children, the Egyptians..." (p. 60).

This flirtation with the Judaic tradition and its commentaries might perhaps have been accompanied by a note on the inferior position imposed on women by the synagogue. But this omission in no way detracts from the enrichment of faith this work offers us, nourishing and uplifting us by meditating on the blessings and the psalms, these "mirrors in which our joys and pains, our laughter and our smiles are reflected" (p. 42).

Some sentences have been wrought by the author into pregnant maxims: "Prayer is primarily wonder" (p. 57). "The state of blessedness is a gateway to wonder, but it is also praise, but a praise which is as much a powerful protest against a world torn apart as an affirmation of creation and hope in the coming of a better one" (p. 9).

"Summing up all this, it may be said that the underlying thought beneath every blessing is that God is the sole bestower of all good things. This thought comes to expression in the use of the adjective *baruch*, blessed, and it rests on two basic realities: firstly, the belief that divine providence grants to each one the share due to each, and, secondly, the vision of creative omnipotence as bestowing blessing and integrating it into the natural course of things" (p. 86).

Théo Buss

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Theologies from Africa, Asia and Latin America, including Black Theology: a Bibliography

Compiled by Sylvie Gasser and Pierre Beffa

During the last few years the library of the Ecumenical Centre, in line with its worldwide acquisition policy, has added to its collection many works by theologians from Africa, Asia and Latin America. A consultation of several such theologians took place recently in Geneva. Prominent at the Vancouver Assembly were theologians speaking out of their own context. This is therefore an appropriate moment for rendering a service to theological professors and students in the realm of contextual theology. All the titles indicated in the bibliography are available in the library and can be borrowed.

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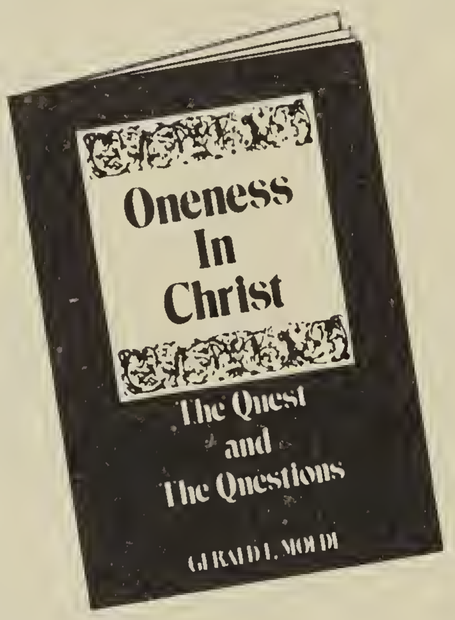

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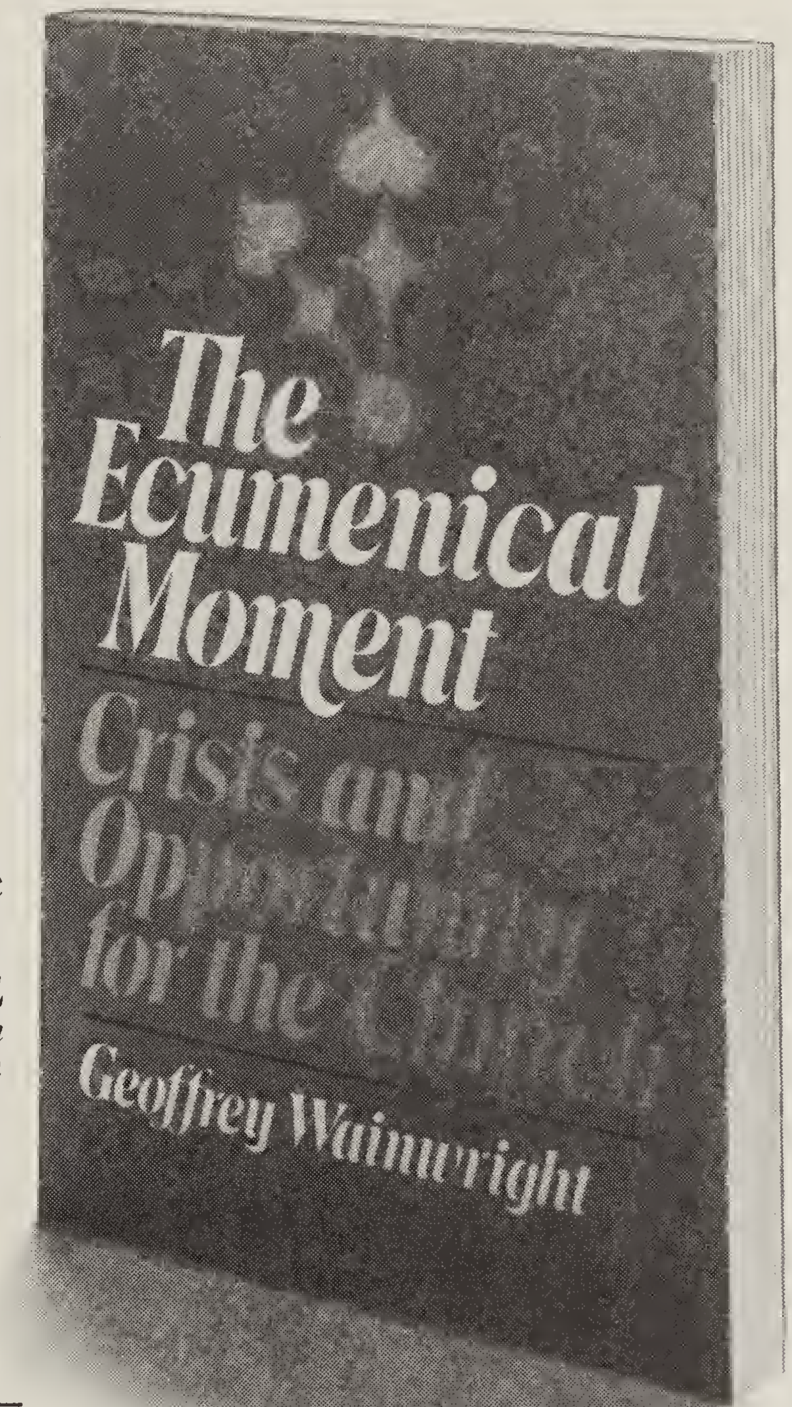

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